

Technical and Bibliographic Notes / Notes techniques et bibliographiques

Institute has attempted to obtain the best original available for filming. Features of this copy which are bibliographically unique, which may alter any of the details in the reproduction, or which may materially change the usual method of filming are listed below.

Coloured covers /
Couverture de couleur

Covers damaged /
Couverture endommagée

Covers restored and/or laminated /
Couverture restaurée et/ou pelliculée

Cover title missing / Le titre de couverture manque

Coloured maps / Cartes géographiques en couleur

Coloured ink (i.e. other than blue or black) /
Encre de couleur (i.e. autre que bleue ou noire)

Coloured plates and/or illustrations /
Planches et/ou illustrations en couleur

Bound with other material /
Relié avec d'autres documents

Only edition available /
Seule édition disponible

Tight binding may cause shadows or distortion along superior margin / La reliure serrée peut causer de l'ombre ou de la distorsion le long de la marge supérieure.

Blank leaves added during restorations may appear within the text. Whenever possible, these have been omitted from filming / Il se peut que certaines pages blanches ajoutées lors d'une restauration n'apparaissent dans le texte, mais, lorsque cela était possible, ces pages n'ont pas été filmées.

Additional comments /
Commentaires supplémentaires:

Is filmed at the reduction ratio checked below /
Est filmé au taux de réduction indiqué ci-dessous.

14x			18x			22x			26x			30x					
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐			
12x			16x			20x			24x			28x			32x		

L'Institut a microfilmé le meilleur exemplaire qu'il lui a été possible de se procurer. Les détails de cet exemplaire qui sont peut-être uniques du point de vue bibliographique, qui peuvent modifier une image reproduite, ou qui peuvent exiger une modification dans la méthode normale de filmage sont indiqués ci-dessous.

☐ Coloured pages / Pages de couleur

☐ Pages damaged / Pages endommagées

☐ Pages restored and/or laminated /
Pages restaurées et/ou pelliculées

☒ Pages discoloured, stained or foxed /
Pages décolorées, tachetées ou piquées

☐ Pages detached / Pages détachées

☒ Showthrough / Transparence

☐ Quality of print varies /
Qualité inégale de l'impression

☐ Includes supplementary material /
Comprend du matériel supplémentaire

☐ Pages wholly or partially obscured by errata slips, tissues, etc., have been refilmed to ensure the best possible image / Les pages totalement ou partiellement obscurcies par un feuillet d'errata, une pelure, etc., ont été filmées à nouveau de façon à obtenir la meilleure image possible.

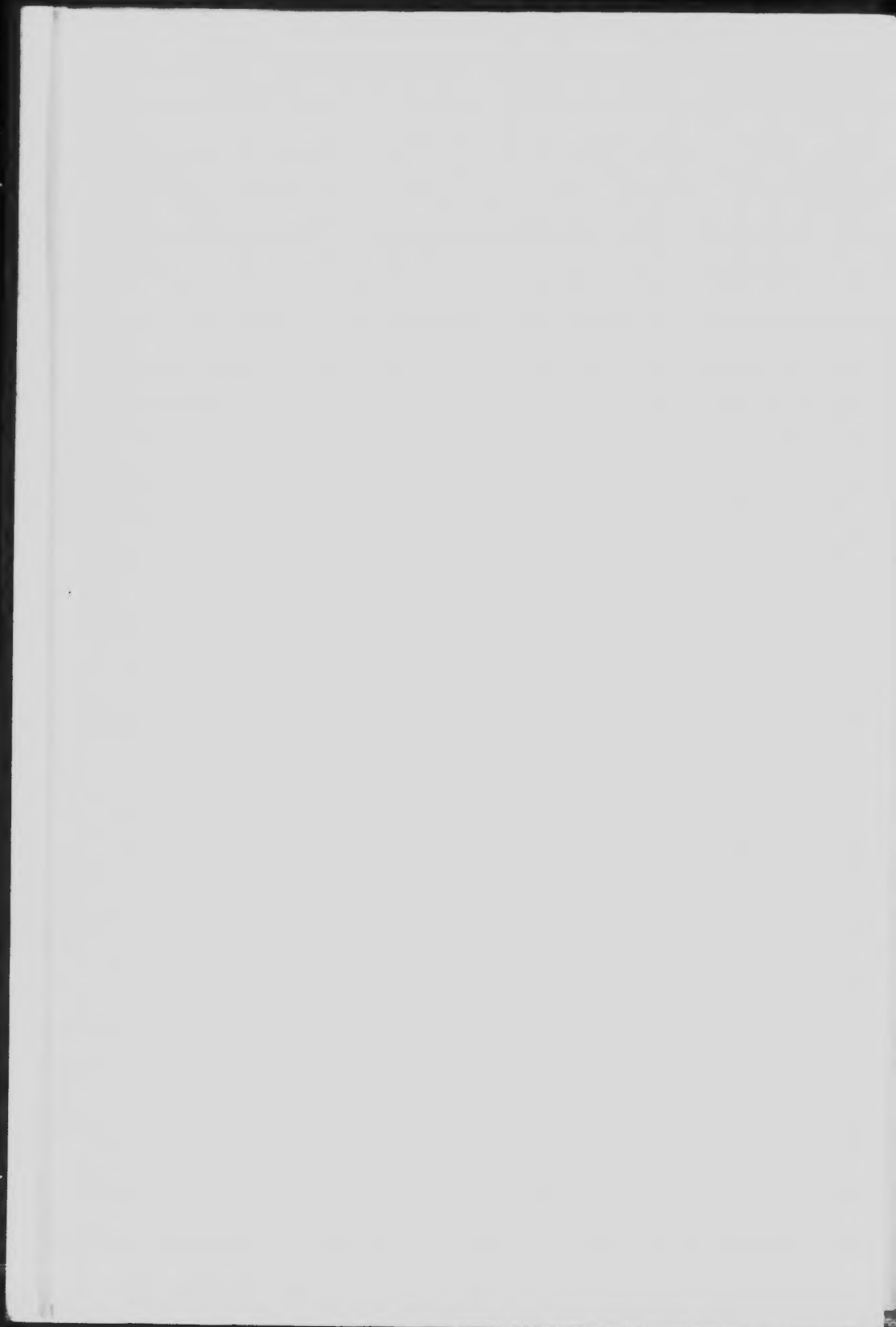
☐ Opposing pages with varying colouration or discolourations are filmed twice to ensure the best possible image / Les pages s'opposant ayant des colorations variables ou des décolorations sont filmées deux fois afin d'obtenir la meilleure image possible.

*Lady Betty
across the
Water*



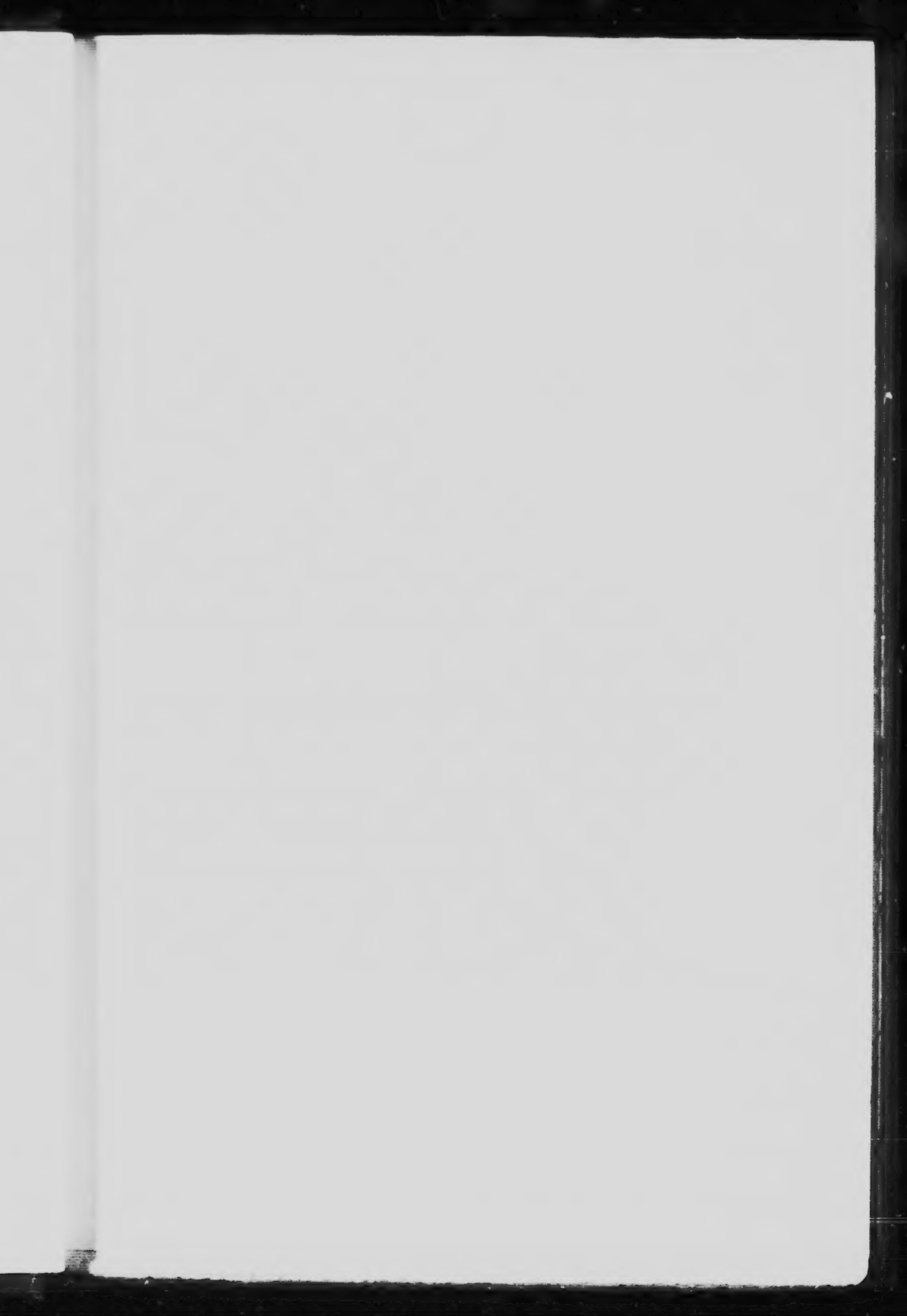
*G N and
A M Williamson*

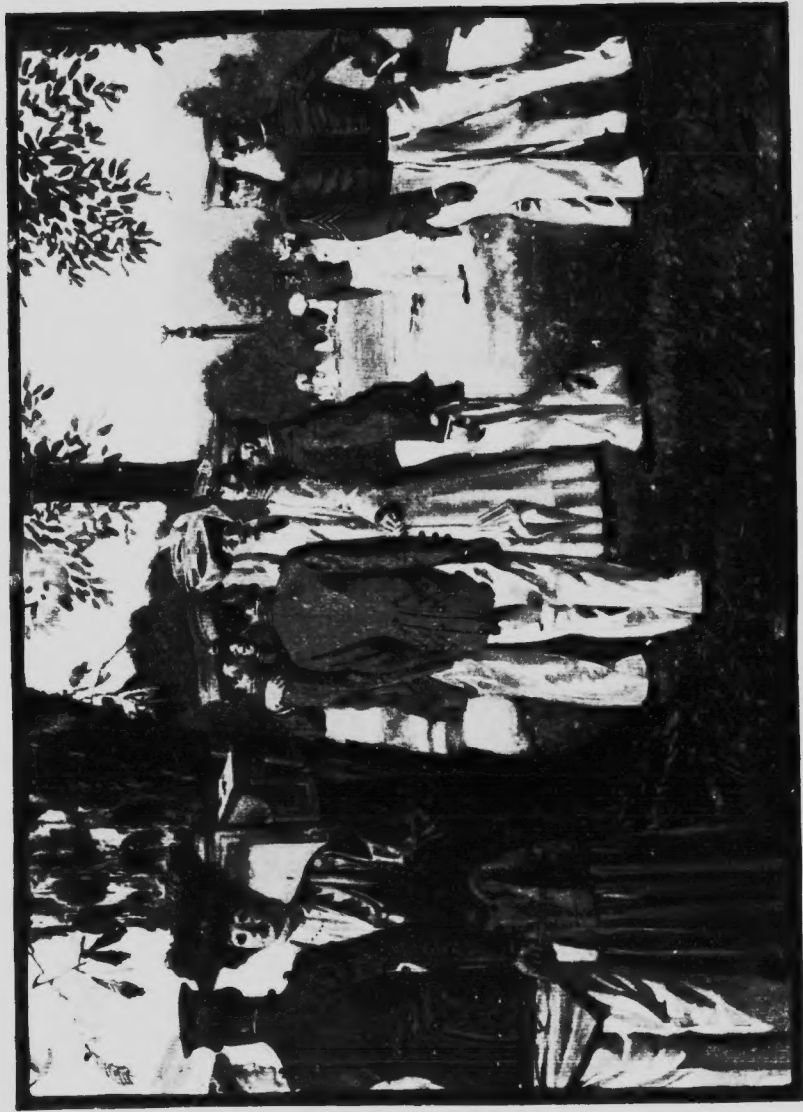
225



LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER







"I found myself chatting away with those cullets as if I had grown up with them"

"I found myself chatting away with those cudeets as if I had grown up with them"

Lady Betty

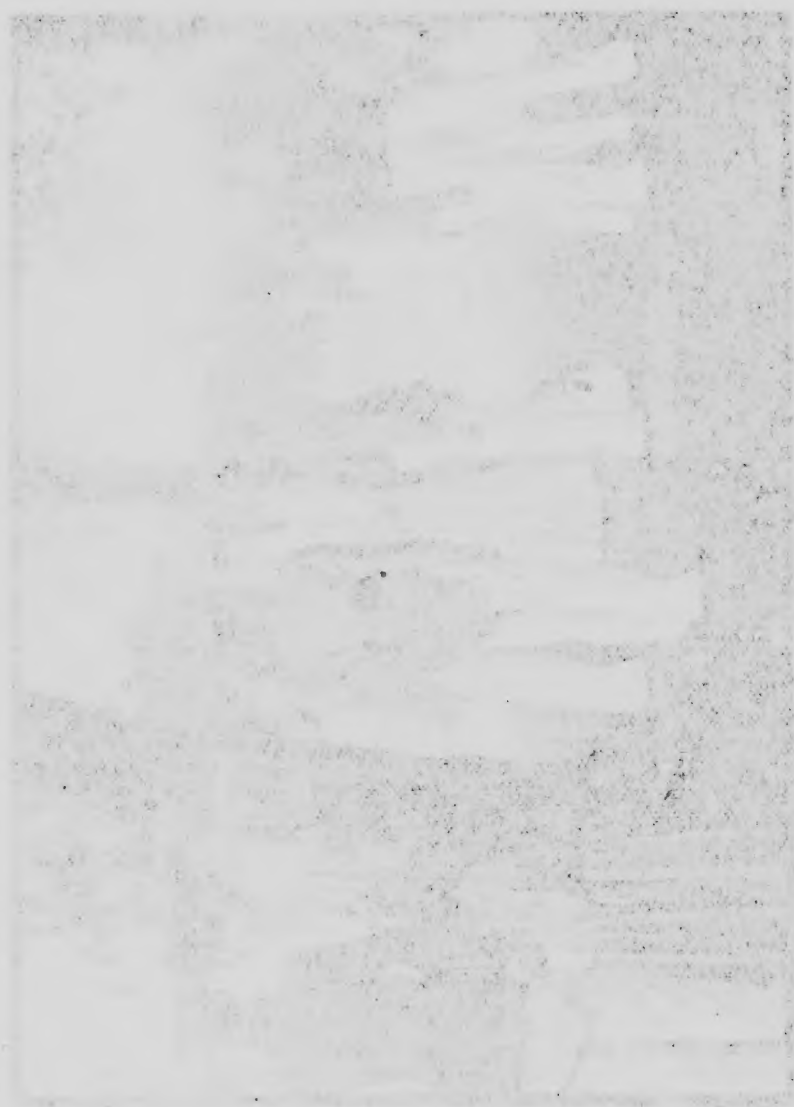
DOWN TO THE WATER

CHAPTER I

THE WATER

THE WATER

Ms
A.9
6.10.11



Lady Betty

ACROSS THE WATER

EDITED BY

C. N. & A. M.
WILLIAMSON

Authors of *My Friend the Chauffeur*



Illustrations by Orson Lowell

TORONTO
THE MUSSON BOOK COMPANY
LIMITED

Copyright, 1906, by
McCLURE, PHILLIPS & CO.

Published, May, 1906

Second Impression

Copyright, 1905, 1906, by The Curtis Publishing Company

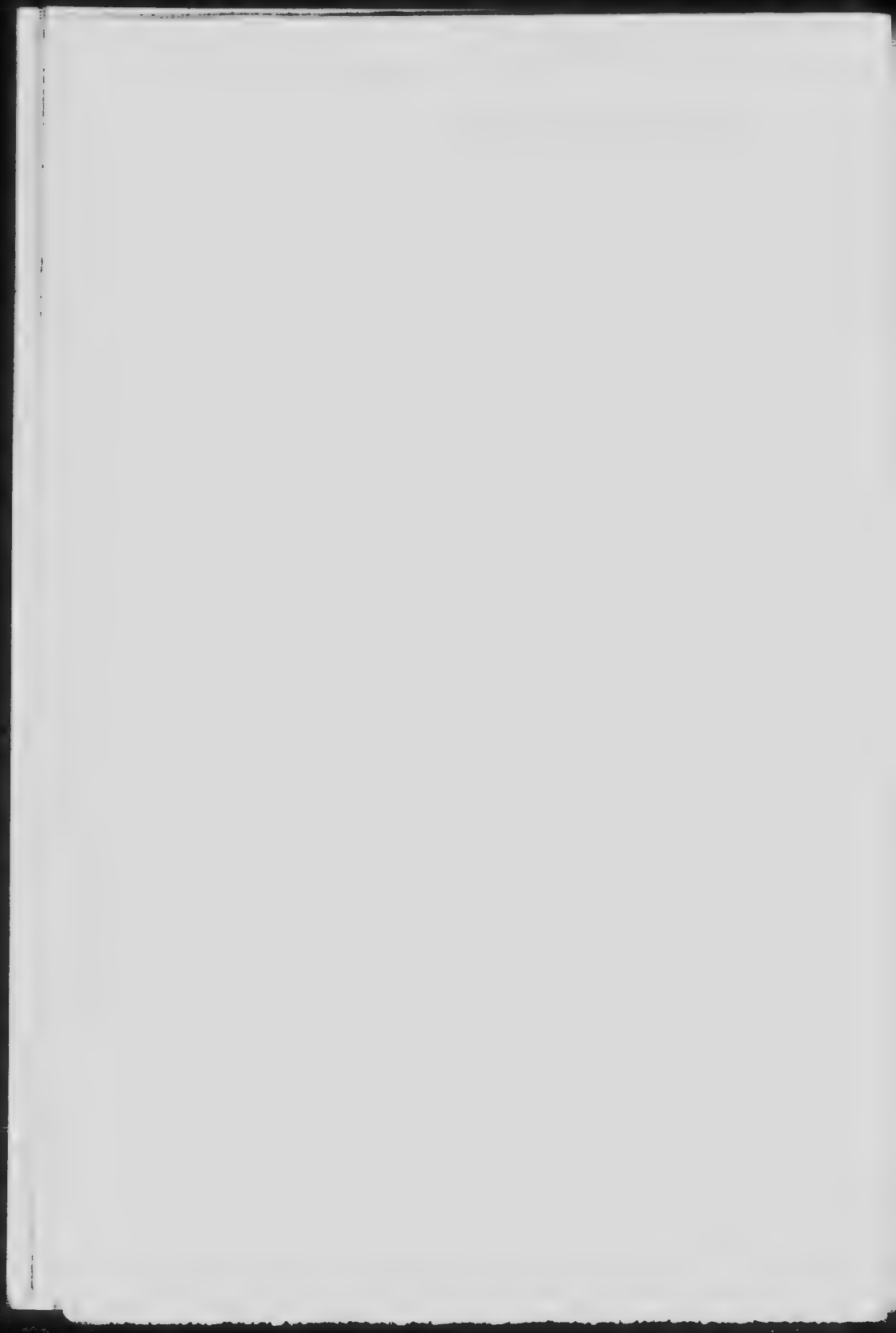
To

*the people of that great, delightful, and hospitable
land which gave Lady Betty the time of her life
and inspiration, this story of her visit is admiringly*

*Dedicated by Betty Bulkeley
and C. N. and A. M. Williamson*

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. ABOUT BEING BANISHED	3
II. ABOUT CROSSING THE WATER	20
III. ABOUT NEW YORK	50
IV. ABOUT SHOPPING AND MEN	83
V. ABOUT WEST POINT AND PROPOSALS	101
VI. ABOUT THE PARK AND LOVE STORIES	118
VII. ABOUT SKY-SCRAPERS AND BEAUTIFUL LADIES	133
VIII. ABOUT NEWPORT AND GORGEOUSNESS	141
IX. ABOUT BATHING, A DRESS, AND AN EARL	156
X. ABOUT A VIOLET TEA AND A MILLIONAIRE	170
XI. ABOUT A GREAT AFFAIR	180
XII. ABOUT A WEDDING AND A DISASTER	200
XIII. ABOUT RUNNING AWAY	211
XIV. ABOUT THE TWENTIETH CENTURY LIMITED AND CHICAGO	223
XV. ABOUT SEEING CHICAGO	227
XVI. ABOUT THE VALLEY FARM	238
XVII. ABOUT COWS AND NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS	253
XVIII. ABOUT SOME COUNTRY FOLK, AND WALKER'S EMPORIUM	272
XIX. ABOUT GETTING ENGAGED	289
XX. ABOUT JIM AND THE DUKE	297



LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- "I FOUND MYSELF CHATTING AWAY WITH THOSE CADETS AS
IF I HAD GROWN UP WITH THEM" *Frontispiece*

FACING
PAGE

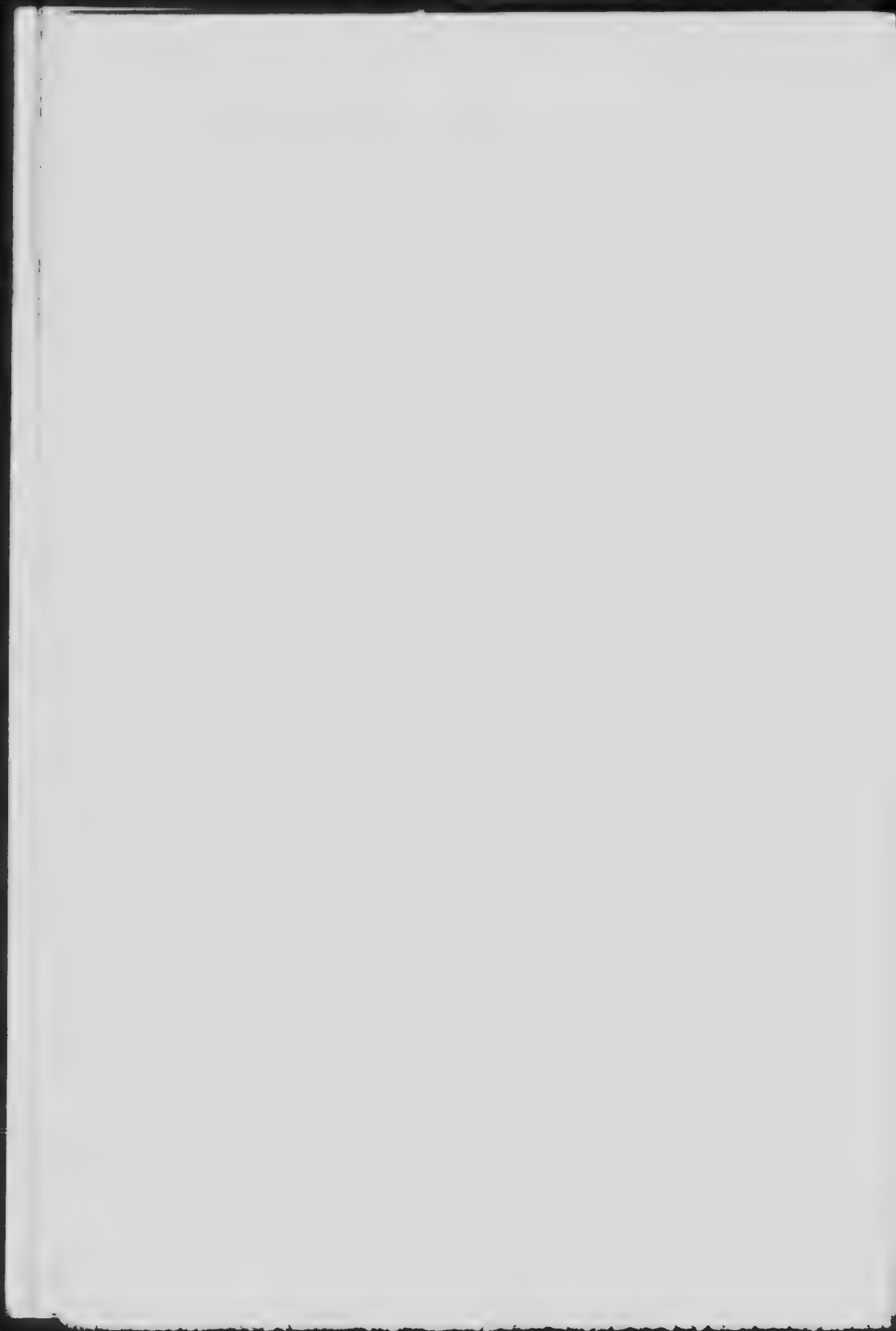
- "HE TURNED AROUND QUICKLY, GLANCED UP AND CAUGHT
MY EYES, AS I WAS LOOKING DOWN, QUITE DISTRESSED" 34

- "WHEN I TURNED TO SPEAK TO HIM HE WAS GONE . . .
AND I WAS IMMEDIATELY SURROUNDED BY OTHER MEN
ASKING ME FOR DANCES" 196

- "I SWEPT PAST HIM WITH MY NOSE IN THE AIR, TRYING TO
LOOK LIKE MOTHER" 206

- "MR. TROWBRIDGE TOOK ME TO THE BEEHIVES TO GET SOME
HONEY AND SHOW ME WHAT A QUEEN BEE IS LIKE" . 258

- "JIM SMILED AND KEPT HIS SEAT WITHOUT THE LEAST AP-
PARENT EFFORT" 302



LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER



I

ABOUT BEING BANISHED

I DON'T know yet whether I'm pleased or not, but I do know that I'm excited—more excited than I've ever been in my life, except perhaps when Miss Mackinstry, my last governess, had hysterics in the schoolroom and fainted among the tea things.

I suppose I shan't be able to decide about the state of my feelings until I've had more of them on the same subject, or until I've written down in this book of mine everything exactly as it's happened. I like doing that; it makes things seem so clear when you try to review them afterwards.

The excitement began at breakfast by Mother having a letter that she liked. I knew she liked it by the way her eyes lighted up, as if they had been lamps and the letter a match. All the other letters, mostly with horrid, trades-manny-looking envelopes, which had been making her quite glowery, she pushed aside.

Mother won't have a crown on her envelopes; she thinks it's vulgar; besides, putting it only on the paper saves expense. This envelope had a great sprawly gold crest, but she didn't seem to disapprove of it. She read on and on, then suddenly glanced up as if she would have said something quickly, to Victoria: she didn't say it, though, for she remembered me. I am never taken into family conclaves, because I'm not out yet. I don't see what difference that makes, especially as I'm not to be allowed

4 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

to come out till after Vic's married, because she was presented four years ago, and isn't even engaged yet; so for all I can tell I may have to stay in till I'm a hundred, or leak out slowly when nobody is noticing, as Vic says girls do in the middle classes. This time I didn't mind, however, for I couldn't see how the letter concerned me; and as I was dying for a sight of Berengaria's puppies, which were born last night, I was glad when Mother told me not to fidget after I'd finished breakfast, but to run down to the kennels if I liked.

Soon I forgot all about the letter, for the puppies were the dearest ducks on earth (can puppies be ducks, I wonder?), and besides, it was such a delicious June morning that I could have danced with joy because I was alive.

I often feel like that; but there's nobody to tell, except the trees and the dogs, and my poor pony, who is almost too old and second-childish now to understand. She was my brother Stanforth's pony first of all, and Stanforth is twenty-eight; then she was Vic's, and Vic is—but Mother doesn't like Vic's age to be mentioned any more, though she is years younger than Stan.

I took a walk in the park and afterwards went through the rose-garden, to see how the roses were getting on. There were a lot of petals for my *pot-pourri*, and gathering them up kept me for some time. Then, as the jar stands in Vic's and my den (she calls it her den, but it has to be part mine, as I have no other), I was going in by one of the long windows, when I heard Mother's voice. "The question is," she was saying, "what's to be done with Betty?"

I turned round and ran away on my tiptoes across the lawn, for I didn't want to be an eavesdropper, and it would be nearly as bad to have Mother know I had heard even

those few words; she would be so annoyed, and Mother chills me all the way through to my bones when she's annoyed. It is wonderful how she does it, for she never scolds; but the thermometer simply drops to freezing-point, and you feel like a poor little shivering crocus that has come up too soon, by mistake, to find the world covered with snow, and no hope of squeezing back into its own cosy warm bulb again.

I stopped out of doors till luncheon, and played croquet against myself, wishing that Stan would run down; for although Stan rather fancies himself as a Gorgeous Person since poor father's death gave him the title, he is quite nice to me, when it occurs to him. I'm always glad when he comes to the Towers, but he hardly ever does in the Season; and then in August and September he's always in Scotland. So is Vic, for the matter of that, and she hates being in the country in May and June, though Surrey is so close to town that luckily she doesn't miss much; but this year we seem to have been horribly poor, for some reason. Vic says it's Stan's fault. He is extravagant, I suppose. However, as everything is really his, I don't see that we ought to complain; only, it can't be pleasant for him to feel that Mother is worrying lest he should marry and make her a frumpy dowager, before we two girls are off her hands.

At luncheon, Mother mentioned to me that she had wired to ask Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox and her cousin, Miss Sally Woodburn, down for dinner and to stay the night. "You will be pleased, Betty, as you like Miss Woodburn so much," she said.

"I like her, but I don't like Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox, and I don't know how to pronounce her," said I.

"For goodness sake, don't call her Mrs. Ess Kay to her face again," cut in Vic.

6 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

"I didn't mean to; it slipped out," I defended myself. "Besides, it was you who nicknamed her that."

"Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox is a very charming person, and a thorough woman of the world," Mother asserted, in that way she has of saying the word which you had better leave for the last if you know what is good for you.

I did leave it for the last so far as answering was concerned, but inside, where, thank goodness, even her eyes can't see, I was wondering hard when Mother had formed that flattering opinion. A fortnight ago I heard her announce that Americans "got upon her nerves," and she hoped she would not soon be called upon to meet any more. As she had made this remark directly after bidding Mrs. Ess Kay good-bye, I naturally supposed that lady to be the immediate cause for it. But now, it seemed, this was not the case.

"You would be very ungrateful if you disliked her," Mother went on, "as she took such a tremendous fancy to you."

"Dear me, I didn't know that!" I exclaimed, opening my eyes wide. "I thought it was Vic she——"

"You are her favourite, as you are with Miss Woodburn, also," said Mother, who gets the effect of being so tremendously dignified partly, I believe, from never clipping her words as the rest of us do. "I am asking them down again especially on your account, and I want you to be particularly nice to them."

"It's easy enough to be nice to Sally Woodburn, but——"

I caught a look from Vic and broke off my sentence, hurrying to change it into another. "As they're sailing for the States so soon, I shan't have time to spread myself much."

"Don't be slangy, Betty; it doesn't suit you," said Mother. "You pick up too many things from Stanforth."

"Trust him not to drop anything worth having," interpolated Vic, which was pert; but Mother never reproves her.

"Perhaps Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox and Miss Woodburn won't come," I said, for the sake of getting on safer ground.

"Not come? Of course they will come. It is short notice, but if they have other engagements they will break them," returned Mother; and though it would be as impossible for her to be vulgar or snobbish, as it would for a tall white arum lily to be either of those things, still I couldn't help feeling that her unconscious thought was: "The invitation to a couple of unknown, touring Americans, from the Duchess of Stanforth, is equivalent to my receiving a Royal Command."

She was probably right,—anyhow, so far as Mrs. Ess Kay is concerned: as for Sally Woodburn, I don't think she has a drop of snobbish blood in her veins. She's Southern—not South American, as I was stupid enough to think at first; but from some Southern State or other; Kentucky, I believe it is. She's short and plump, and olive and smooth as ivory satin, with soft, lazy brown eyes, a voice like rich cream, a smile which says: "Please like me"; and pretty, crinkly dark hair that is beginning to glitter with silver network here and there, though she isn't exactly old, even for a woman—perhaps about thirty.

I knew that Miss Woodburn rather fancied me, and I was quite pleased to take her up to her room, when she and her elder cousin arrived, about an hour before dinner. I stopped for a few minutes, and then left her with her maid, while I went to help Vic, and get myself ready.

8 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

We've only one maid between the three of us, nowadays; which means (unless there's some reason why Vic should be made particularly smart), that Mother gets more than a third of Thompson's services. That's as it should be, of course, and we don't grudge it; but Vic's rather helpless, and I always have to hurry, to see her through.

This evening, though, I found Thompson in Vic's room, next to mine; and just as I scientifically dislocated my arms to unhook my frock, which does up behind, Mother came in. "Betty," she said, quite playfully for her, "I have a very pleasant surprise for you. You would never be able to guess, so I will tell you. I have consented to let you go and visit Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox and Miss Woodburn in America. Aren't you delighted?"

I felt as if the wall of the house were tumbling down, and I would presently be crumpled up underneath.

"My goodness gracious, Mother!" I managed to stammer, forgetting how I've always stood in awe of her, since I could toddle. "How—how perfectly extraordinary! *Why* am I going? And is it all decided, whether I like or not?"

"Of course you will like. To travel with pleasant companions and see a great, new country under such charming auspices, is an immense privilege, a very unusual privilege for a young girl," Mother replied promptly. "As for the 'why,' you are going because you have been cordially invited; because I think the experience will be for your advantage, present and future; because also it will be good for a growing girl like you to have the bracing effect of a sea voyage."

"Mother, I haven't a thing the matter with me, and I haven't grown the eighth of an inch this whole last year; you can see by my frocks," I protested, more on principle than because it would be any use to protest, or because I

was sure that I wanted Mother to change her mind. Naturally the protest had no effect, but Mother's mood mercifully remained placid, and she didn't give me a single freezing look.

"Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox is a woman of good family and position in her own country," she went calmly on. "I have satisfied myself on those points beyond doubt, or I should not dream of allowing you to be her guest. She has a cottage at Newport, and will take you there, as summer, it seems, is not the Season in New York. You may stay with her through July and August,—even for September, if you are amusing yourself. Later, Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox will send you home with friends of hers, who can be trusted to take good care of you. She knows several people, she tells me, who are crossing in the autumn, to winter abroad; and they would bring you to me. Of course, I should have to be nice to them, by way of showing my appreciation of any trouble you had given; but a dinner, and a Saturday to Monday at most, would be quite enough."

So it was all arranged, even to the details of my homecoming, and the price to be paid for returning me, like a parcel, to my owner! Suddenly I remembered the words I had overheard at the window of the den. "The question is, what is to be done with Betty?"

Mother had evidently been so anxious to have the question answered, that she had at once taken measures to settle it. But why should anything be done with me? Nothing ever had been, so far, except when I was sent last autumn to stop with my aunt; and she was so much annoyed because my cousin Loveland came home unexpectedly, that after that I could do nothing to please her, and was packed back to Battlemead Towers in disgrace, I never could understand for what crime.

10 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

"How did Mrs. Ess—I mean, Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox happen to ask for a visit from me?" I ventured to wriggle out, like a worm who isn't sure whether it had better turn or not. I was certain that for some reason of her own, Mother had suggested the idea, if only hypnotically; but she seemed almost too frank as she answered, and it was frightening not even to be snubbed.

"I told you to-day that she had taken a fancy to you, my dear. Of course, she could not hope to secure Victoria, even if she preferred her, for Victoria has important engagements which will carry her through the season, and afterwards to Cowes and up to Scotland for the shooting at Dorloch Castle. But you are still almost a child; and children do not have engagements. Nevertheless, you are Lady Betty Bulkeley, the Duke of Stanforth's sister, and as such, though in yourself you are an unimportant little person, it's not impossible that as a member of your family, these Americans may think you worth cultivating. One hears that they worship titles."

"I'm sure they can't worship them as much as some people in our own country, who haven't got them, do," I cried, defending Americans for Miss Woodburn's sake. "Vic says——"

"Never mind what Victoria says," returned Mother. "The less you think on these subjects, the better, my dear Betty. I merely hinted at a possible and partial incentive to these people's friendship for you, so that you need not feel it incumbent to be oppressively grateful, you know. I should wish you to keep your dignity among foreigners, even though you would, of course, look upon Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox as, in a way, your guardian. Now I must call Thompson, and have her put me into my dinner dress, as there is no more time to waste. When Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox speaks of your visit, you will know what to say."

I mumbled something vaguely dutiful, and began to dress as quickly as I could; but the more I thought of it, the more I felt that I hadn't been fairly treated, to be disposed of in such an offhand way. After all, *I am* eighteen; and a person of eighteen isn't a child.

I'm not sure I wasn't pouting when Vic came in, ready for dinner, asking if she should fasten up my frock. I had nearly finished it, for practice has made me almost as clever as a conjurer about manipulating my hands behind my back, but when Vic flew at me and began giving useless little touches, I guessed that she wanted to whisper something in my ear without Mother seeing, if she should happen to prance in at the wrong moment—as she often does.

"Look here, Betty, are you going to be a good little girl, and do what you're bid, without making a fuss?" she asked, in a quick, low voice.

"I'm not certain yet," said I. "I'm thinking it over. I don't see why I should be sent off across the water with strangers, at a moment's notice, and I——"

"'Tisn't a moment's notice. It's five days. They're not sailing till Wednesday, and as they've a suite engaged,—the best on the ship, Mrs. Ess Kay says,—your going won't put them out a bit, and they'll *love* having you. As for the whys and wherefores, Mother's been telling you, hasn't she?"

"She talked about my health and valuable experiences, and a lot of things in the air, but I feel there's something behind it, and I hate mysteries——"

"If I can convince you it's for the good of the family in general, if not yours in particular, will you be a nice, white, woolly lamb, and go with your kind little American friends?" Vic broke in, with her head on my shoulder and an arm slipped round my waist.

12 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

"Mrs. Ess Kay's neither little nor kind," said I, "but, of course, I'll do anything to help, if only I'm treated like a rational, grown-up human being."

"And so you shall be. I told Mother it would be much better to be frank with you, if you *are* a Baby. It's too late to explain things now, but if you'll be sweet to Mrs. Ess Kay, and agree with everything everybody says about your trip, when we come up to bed and Mother's door's shut, I'll make a clean breast and show you *exactly* how matters stand."

With this, we separated, for we could hear Mrs. Ess Kay's voice in the corridor, talking to Sally Woodburn on the way downstairs. Her voice is never difficult to hear; rather the other way; and Miss Woodburn's soft little drawl following it, reminded me of a spoonful of Devonshire cream after a bunch of currants.

Mother was with them both in the oak drawing-room when Vic and I got down, and I found myself staring at Mrs. Ess Kay with a new kind of criticism in my mind; indeed, it hadn't occurred to me before to criticise at all. I'd only felt that I didn't want to come any closer to her. Now I was to come much closer, it seemed, and I looked at the glittering lady, wondering how it would feel to be so close—wondering what *she* herself was.

Outside, she's more like the biggest and most splendid dressmaker's model ever made for a Paris show-window than anything else I can think of; at least, she is like that from under her chin down to the tips of her toes. I say under her chin, for that feature, as well as all the others above it, are miles removed from a pretty, wax lady in a show-window.

I never supposed till I met Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox, that a live woman could have a figure exactly like the fashion-plates, swelling like a tidal wave above an hourglass of a

waist, and retreating far, far into the dim perspective below it, then suddenly bulging out behind like a round, magnificent knoll, after a deep curve inward under the shoulders. But Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox's figure does all these things even when she stands still, and a great many more when she walks, which act she accomplishes in a grand, sweepy kind of a way, with her head a little thrown back, as if she wants everybody to know that she is tremendously important in the scheme, not only of the world, but of the universe.

Yet in spite of all, in the end it's her face which impresses you even more than her figure—which is a real triumph, as the figure is so elaborate and successful. On top of her head is a quite little coil of hair that lifts itself, and spirals up, like a giant snail-shell. A dagger keeps it in place, and looks as if the point plunged into Mrs. Ess Kay's brain, though I suppose it doesn't. Over the forehead is a noble roll which has the effect of a breaker just about to fall into surf, but never falling. It's a black breaker, and the straight, thick eyebrows an inch below it are black too; so are the short eyelashes, also thick and straight, like a stiff fringe, but the eyes are grey—grey as glass, though not transparent. Sometimes they seem almost white, with just a tiny bead of black for the pupil. I never saw anything so hard (except the glass marbles I used to play with): and they look at most people as if something behind them were doing a mental sum in arithmetic, for the Something's own advantage. They don't look at Mother in that way; no eyes in the world would dare; but I'm talking about ordinary people, who are not tall white arum lilies, with the air of having grown in kings' gardens.

Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox's nose is well-shaped and rather large; so is her mouth, with a "thin red line" of lips;

14 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

but somehow it's the chin—the feature you simply take for granted and hardly remember on most faces—which dominates the rest. It comes rounding out under her lips, making them seem to recede, though they don't really; and it's square, with an effect of the skin being laid on over some perfectly hard material, like marble, or the same ivory her teeth are made of. Besides all this,—as if it weren't enough—she's a widow; one of those women who look as if they had been born widows; anyway, I'm certain that Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox can never have been a child.

Sally Woodburn's chin is rather full, too. I wonder if, in spite of her lazy ways, and slow, soft speech, she is very decided, like her cousin, who is so much older and bigger, and apparently able to make the gentle little Southern relative do as she wills?

Mrs. Ess Kay, terribly glittering this evening in a gown contrasting strongly with our simple things, was almost too nice to me, saying several times over how glad she was that I was going to visit her. At dinner, she painted word-pictures of the "good times" she would give me, and though I've never been able to care for her, and don't a bit more now, I began to be rather excited by her talk, for she made things seem so interesting and new. Besides, it appears that Sally Woodburn will be at Newport most of the summer, so I shall have her to fall back upon.

As for me, I was good as gold, and Vic threw me approving glances, for which I was grateful, for I like being in Vic's good graces. She doesn't often bother with me much, but when she does, she is so sweet it makes up for everything—and she knows that well.

I could hardly wait to hear her "explanations," and so I was glad Mrs. Ess Kay and Miss Woodburn were hypnotised by Mother into thinking they wanted to go early to bed. Mother is very clever about such things.

She didn't come again to talk to me in my room; I suppose she thought it best to let the new ideas simmer. Anyhow, she sent Thompson away, and shut the door between Vic's room and hers sooner than usual. Presently Vic slipped quietly in to me, in the new blue dressing-gown which was to have been mine, only when she saw it finished, she wanted it, and had four inches taken up above the hem.

"Well, how are you feeling about things now?" she asked, sitting down in front of the mirror, with her hair-brush in her hand.

"I'll tell you after you've told me why I ought to feel one way more than another," I said with prudent reserve.

"Then, like a good child, brush my hair. I wouldn't let Thompson do anything, because I knew you'd be dying to have me, and I can talk so beautifully while my hair is being done. It makes me wish I were a pussy cat, so that I could purr."

"I hate having mine touched by anyone," said I.

"Well, perhaps I should hate it too, if mine were curly and about six inches thick, and came down to my knees; I should be afraid of being pulled to pieces. There! That's heavenly. Well, now I can begin. You know, Baby, this isn't a *quite* new idea about your going to America. Mrs. Ess Kay *did* say something on the subject when she was staying here before."

"Oh, yes, when she was going away she said how much she would like to have either of us visit her. Is that all?"

"It's something, isn't it? Enough to make a handle of, when a handle's needed."

"But why is a handle needed?"

"I'm going to tell you the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Mother had a letter from Sir Gilbert Mantell this morning."

16 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

"Oh, that big, splashy crest was his, then. It *looked* like him, now I come to think of it. Nobody but a brand-new knight, with piles and piles of money, would need one more than half the size."

"Don't sneer at his money, my good child. We want it badly enough in this family."

"Not his."

"Yes, we do. And I see a reasonable prospect of our getting it, if you'll go to the States with Mrs. Ess Kay."

"What can that have to do with it? I don't know one bit what you mean."

"That's because you're such a great baby. If you *must* have every t crossed and every i dotted, Sir Gilbert has apparently conceived a patronising toleration for your Victoria, which is likely, if properly fostered and encouraged, to develop into something more satisfactory."

"Patronising, indeed! That dull elephant!"

"Elephants are not, as a rule, dull. And forty thousand a year in any form can afford to patronise a daughter of a hundred dukes without a penny, whereas I'm merely the granddaughter of three. In fact, my dear, I'm humbly anxious that Sir Gilbert should propose; and as he's been rather nice, and as he's written almost asking for an invitation to come down with Stan, from next Saturday to Monday, although he carefully states he's been invited for the same time, by Princess Paul of Plon, things look hopeful. The only trouble is—you."

"Me!"

"Yes, you. The one time he ever saw you, was when you had that frightful cold, and looked hideous, with your poor dear nose twice its size, and your eyes half theirs. But—well, Betty, you're a beauty, and I'm not, though I do flatter myself I'm not bad looking. I'm

'penny plain,' and you're 'tuppence coloured'; and the Mantell man can afford tuppence for a wife. You are so frightfully, luridly pretty that it's almost improper, and if he comes down and sees you, he'll probably think you better worth his money than I am."

"What nonsense! And if he were such an idiot, of course I should refuse him."

"You would. That's one of mother's difficulties. Even you must see that would do no good from the family point of view."

"I could keep out of the creature's way."

"You couldn't, without Stan making some blundering remark, or some *contretemps* happening; it would be sure to. It's much safer to have you absolutely out of the way; and it was when we were talking it over this morning, that Mother hit upon the plan of sending you to the States. You know how prompt she is, once she's made up her mind? Mother is really a wonderful woman. Twenty minutes later she sent a telegram to Mrs. Ess Kay, asking her to come down, and certain, under Providence, that she would; for an intimate sort of invitation like this, when we're alone (especially after the Great Disappointment), would be too flattering to a woman of that type not to be snapped at, no matter if a dozen engagements had to be trampled in the dust."

"What Great Disappointment are you talking about?"

"Infant in Arms! Why, Stan and Miss Woodburn."

"I—didn't know—nobody told me——"

"Fancy needing to be told! As if that weren't the only reason why Mother smiled on Mrs. Ess Kay in the beginning. It was because she thought Miss Woodburn might do for Stanforth, who *must* marry money, and is too poor, horribly poor, to be much of a catch with most English heiresses, who aren't as keen on titles as they

18 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

used to be, unless there's some solid foundation for them to stand on, and not wobble. Everyone says Miss Woodburn's a great heiress, and though she's a few years older than Stan, she's a lady, a charming creature, and not bad looking. Mother thought all that out, the day they were introduced to her at the Northminster's concert, so she invited them here. But Stan and the Woodburn wouldn't *look* at each other. It was useless even for Mother's genius to attempt the impossible, so she resigned herself to the inevitable, and gave the thing up. She meant to drop the Americans gently—which she could easily do as they were going home soon—when this new idea popped up. It's really important for me, dear. I do want you to see that. It will be *so* much better all around if you are out of the way, anyhow until I'm safely engaged, and the wedding-day fixed. Then, you know, if you haven't meanwhile picked up an American millionaire on the other side—don't look so horrified!—Mother will be able to devote herself to you, heart and soul, as she has to me. Next spring you can be presented——”

“Don't bribe,” I said, feeling as if I wanted to cry. “If you want to get rid of me, I'll go without that. But I should have thought I might be sent again to Aunt Sophy's.”

“Not again till our magnificent cousin's safely married. She wouldn't have you there. Remember how she sent you home, last time. Poor Loveland! He too, must think about collecting honest gold (somebody else's), to brighten up his coronet. We're a poverty-stricken lot, my child, and it's for me, with your help, to retrieve the fallen fortunes of this branch of the family.”

“That's settled then,” said I, as drily as I could with wet tears in the background. “And now, let's go to bed, please. I'm sleepy.”

I wasn't; but my eyes were hot, and there was a lump in my throat. I was homesick—dreadfully homesick, for something—I don't know what, but it seemed to be something I've never had yet and probably never can have. That is why I wanted to be alone, and write everything down exactly as it has happened.

II

ABOUT CROSSING THE WATER

ONLY ten days have passed, but I feel as if they were a hundred, I have lived so much. I've heard people near me in deck-chairs saying that it's been a "dull voyage," but whatever else it has been for *me*, it hasn't been dull.

In the first place, I've never been on the sea before, except crossing the Channel, which doesn't count, of course. And now that I've been thrown with so many people—all sorts of people—I realise how few I have known in my life, so far. If I had about twice as many fingers and toes as I have, I believe I might tick off every human being I've ever met as actual acquaintances, outside my own relations.

I've lived always at dear, beautiful old Battlemead (it seems doubly beautiful as I think of it now, from far away); and till last year most of my time was spent in the schoolroom, or walking, or pottering about in a pony carriage with one of the governesses I used to drive to distraction. When we had house parties I was kept out of the way, as Mother said it spoiled young girls to be taken notice of, and I should have my fun later. When the others went up to town for the Season, as they often did, I was left behind, and though Battlemead is within five-and-twenty miles of London, I suppose I haven't been there more than two dozen times in my life. When I did go, it was generally for a concert, or a *matinée*, and, of course, I enjoyed it immensely; but I don't know that it taught me

much about life. And the one time I was taken abroad we had nothing to do with anyone we met at hotels. Being on this big ship seemed at first exactly like being at a play when I had been brought in late, and found it difficult to know which were the leading actors, which the villains and villainesses, and what the plot was about.

Now, though, I've been through so many experiences, I feel as if I were *in* the play myself, not watching it from outside.

Everything was very nice, though very strange, to begin with.

Dear old Stan came out of his shell and actually travelled all the way to Southampton to see me off, which was good of him, especially as Vic explained that he and Sally Woodburn had been thrown at each other's heads, in vain.

He'd brought me a great box of sweets, a bunch of roses, and several magazines; and just as we were starting he slipped something small but fat into my hand.

"That's to help you keep your end up, Kid, in case you're imposed on," said he. "You *are* only a kid, you know; but all the same, don't let them treat you like one, and if you get the hump over there, just you cable me. I'll see you through, and have you back again with your own sort, Mater or no Mater, hanged if I don't."

Stan never made me such a long speech before, and after we sailed and I got time to look at the fat thing he'd put in my hand, I found it was a lot of goldpieces bundled up in two ten-pound notes. The gold made twelve sovereigns more, so Stan had given me altogether more than thirty pounds. All that money, with the twenty pounds Mother had told me to use only "when strictly necessary," made me feel a regular millionaire. I've never had a sixth part as much before, in my life.

22 LADY BETEY ACROSS THE WATER

Stan's kindness was just like a cup of something warm and comforting when you're tired and cold, so that I began to brighten up and feel happy.

I liked our suite, with two staterooms, a bath, and a dear little white-and-blue drawing-room, about as big as the old dolls' house I inherited from Vic. I was thankful to find I was to chum with Miss Woodburn, not Mrs. Ess Kay, for I *never* could have stood that. It was fun finding places to hang up our things when they were unpacked, and Mrs. Ess Kay's French maid, Louise, helped me get settled, paying me so many compliments on my hair, and my eyes and my complexion, that I grew quite confused; but perhaps that's a habit in which American ladies encourage their maids.

"But the marvel that is Miladi's hair! It is of the colour of gold, and with a natural curl. It will be so great a joy if I may dress it. And her complexion! It is beyond that of any English demoiselle I have seen, yet all the world knows they are the best on earth. With such eyes, no doubt Miladi can wear any colour; and she has the figure for which the make of corsets is of no import."

If it had been in English, I should have wanted to order her out of the room; but things like that don't sound so objectionable in French.

Miss Woodburn's, and especially Mrs. Ess Kay's clothes looked so exquisite that I was mortified to have Louise unpack mine, though I have brought my smartest things, and Vic had two or three pretty blouses of hers altered in a great hurry, for me. Besides, Mother said my outfit was quite good enough for a young girl in England, and that I was not to let myself feel dissatisfied if in another country they chose to overdress.

Anyhow, I will say for Mrs. Ess Kay that she didn't

appear to be ashamed of me at first. On the contrary, she had a way of seeming to show me off, almost as if she thought I did her credit.

When we had unpacked, we three went to luncheon, and took the first seats which were vacant. But presently Mrs. Ess Kay sent for the chief steward or someone important. "I am Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox," said she, in a haughty voice, "and I have as my guest Lady Betty Bulkeley, daughter of the Duchess of Stanforth. You must give me three of the best seats at the Captain's table."

I couldn't help hearing, and my ears did tingle, but Miss Woodburn only smiled and looked down, with a funny twinkle under her eyelashes, which curl up so much that it always seems as if she were just going to laugh.

I thought, if I were the steward, I would give us the worst seats on the ship, to teach us not to be proud; but he didn't do anything of the sort; he was as meek as a lamb, so I'm sure he can't have any sense of humour. He said Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox might count on him, and she and her party should have places on the Captain's right hand.

Mrs. Ess Kay was as bad with the deck steward. She found that he hadn't put our chairs (which she had brought on board herself) in the right place, and she had him called up and made a great fuss. The cards of a Reverend Somebody, his wife and daughters, were on chairs in the position which she had made up her mind to have, exactly amidship and on the shady side.

"I must have my chairs changed and put here," she said. And then—oh, horror!—I'm certain I caught her repeating the formula she'd used at luncheon. "I am Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox, and I have as my guest, etc, etc." To be sure, she had walked off to a little distance with the

24 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

deck-steward, where our chairs were, and I might have been mistaken; but two or three people who were standing near looked suddenly very hard at me, and I know I turned scarlet with annoyance, to be labelled in that way, as if I were a parcel marked "glass" and to be handled with care.

Afterwards, when I came to read the passenger-list, I found that there was nobody else on board with any sort of title, not even an Honourable Anybody; otherwise, of course, Mrs. Ess Kay's little manœuvre (which I'm afraid must have been meant for snobbishness) wouldn't have excited the slightest notice.

"Now," said Mrs. Ess Kay, when we were settled in our places, "I know a good many people on the ship, but most of them are Nobodies, and I do *not* intend to be troubled with them, nor do I think that the Duchess would care to have me let Betty mix herself up with anybody and everybody. I shall do a great deal of weeding and select her acquaintances carefully."

"Betty," indeed! I'd never told her that she might call me Betty; and I hate having persons I don't care for take hold of my name, without using a handle to touch it. It makes me feel as I did when I was a child, and Mother commanded me to let myself be kissed by unkissable and extraneous grown-ups.

Thank goodness, Vic and I have come into the world with something of poor Father's sense of humour. My share often serves me as well as balm on a wound, or as a nice, dry, crackly little biscuit which you're enchanted to find when you're hungry, and thought you had nothing to eat; and I got a good deal of quiet comfort out of it during Mrs. Ess Kay's "weeding" process, which otherwise would have done nothing but make me squirm.

When we had been on deck for a short time, a number of people came up to speak to Mrs. Ess Kay, and some to Miss Woodburn. The water was as smooth as the floor of a ballroom when it's been well waxed for a dance, and there was no excuse for the most sensitive person to be ill; consequently the deck was something like a kaleidoscope, with all its moving groups of men and women, girls and children. Most of the best-looking and best-dressed ones were Americans, and a great many seemed to know each other. Some of them laughed a good deal, and talked in high voices, putting emphasis on prepositions, which Miss Mackinstry and the others would never let me do in writing compositions. Somehow, though, when these people spoke it sounded very nice and cordial, more so than it does when English people greet each other, though the voices weren't so sweet—except a few that drawled in a pretty, Southern way, like Sally Woodburn's.

I could tell which were the poor things that Mrs. Ess Kay wanted to weed out of her acquaintance-garden for next season, by the way she acted when they came to say "How do you do?" to her. She screwed up her eyes till they looked hard and sharp enough to go through you like a thin knife—(or more like a long, slender hatpin jabbing your head), and having waited an instant before returning their greeting, slowly answered; "Very well, thank you. Yes, I *am* going home rather early. I'm due at Newport as soon as possible"; then fingered her open book (which she hadn't peeped into before) and made a little, just noticeable gesture with her lorgnette.

Then the poor people were too much crushed to stop and try to talk to Miss Woodburn, though she always looked at them sweetly, as if she would make up for her cousin being a dragon if she could.

26 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

By and by, somebody else would sail up, perhaps not half as nice to look at as the one who had gone. But lo, Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox would be suddenly transformed. She would smile, and hold out her hand. To their "How do you do?" she would respond "How do you do?" and though I don't think she's really much interested in anyone but herself, she would ask where they had been, what they had been doing, and how it happened they were going back so soon. The next thing, she would say to me: "Betty, dear, I should like you and Mrs. or Mr. So-and-So to know each other, as I hope you'll meet again, while you're staying with me. Lady Betty Bulkeley, etc., etc. I wonder if you have ever met her brother, the Duke of Stanforth, and her cousin, the Marquis of Loveland, over in London?"

Loveland would have had a fit if he could have heard her, for, of course, at home only the lower middle classes and such people hurl a Marquis's title at his head in that fashion; but I suppose foreigners, unless they've been in England a long time, don't know the difference.

When I got a chance, I asked Sally Woodburn how Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox made her distinctions in snubbing some people and preening herself to others.

"My deah," said Sally (I'm to call her "Sally" now; it's been understood between us for some time), "my deah, you're a poor, innocent child, and I reckon you've been brought up in darkness, without even so much as hearing of the Four Hundred."

"What are the Four Hundred? Are they a kind of Light Brigade, like the Six Hundred?" I asked. "Or is it a sort of governing body like—like the Council of Three?"

She laughed so much at this, with her charming, velvety laugh, that I grew quite nervous, for it's embarrassing

to have said something funny when you've meant to be rather intelligent. But soon she took pity on me. "You perfect love," she said; "that's really too sweet. It deserves to be put into *Life*, or something. And yet you're not so far wrong, when one comes to think of it. The Four Hundred *is* a kind of governing body; only I believe it's really reduced to Two Hundred now. They govern New York; and Newport; and Lennox; and Bar Harbour; and several other places which are considered very nice and important."

"Oh! Are they Republicans or Democrats?" I enquired, sure that I really was being intelligent at last, for I'd heard Stan say that, in America, the Republican party was rather like our Conservatives, and the Democrats like the Liberals; and I'd remembered because I believe I should be very much interested in politics if only I understood more about them. But Sally seemed to think that question funny, too.

"They can be either, my poor lamb," she exclaimed; "and they can be almost anything else they like, if only they're just awfully, dreadfully rich, and can manage to scrape up a family crest. It used to be the crest that counted, with the man who invented the Four Hundred; but since his day, that idea has got buried under heaps and heaps of gold, and pearls and diamonds; especially pearls. In those places I was telling you about, you don't exist unless you're in the Four Hundred, which is now being sifted down to Two Hundred, and will probably be Seventy-five in a year or two. You may have the bluest blood in America in your veins; you may be simply *smear*ed with ancestors, but if you haven't managed to push forward in a clever, indescribable way, neither they nor you will ever be noticed, and your grey hairs will go down to the grave in the Wrong Set. Now do you understand

28 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

why my cousin Katherine makes narrow eyes for some people, and broad smiles for others?"

"Ye-es, I suppose I do," I answered. "Only—we are quite different at home. I haven't been about at all yet, but I know; because some things are in the air. How did Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox ever have the poor Wrong Setters for acquaintances, though?"

"Because (she'd kill me if she heard this) she has only lately got into the Right Set herself, and after trouble enough to give an ordinary woman nervous prostration. That kind of thing *does* give it to a lot of women—especially if they fail. But Cousin Katherine very seldom fails. She almost always carries things through. If you knew anything about America in general, and New York in particular, you'd be able to realise what a hard time she's had, when I tell you that till her husband died she lived west of Chicago. To get into the Four Hundred if you've lived west of Chicago, (unless you're Californian, which is getting to be fashionable), is just like having to climb over one of those great, high walls of yours in England, bristling with nails or broken glass."

"My goodness!" I exclaimed. "How funny! Fancy if people who live in Surrey should glare at people who live in Devonshire."

"That's different. You see, Chicago is *new*."

"But so is all America, isn't it?" I asked, stupidly.

"What difference can a hundred or so years make?"

"We haven't begun to think in centuries yet, on our side of the water, my deah." (She has the most delicious way of saying "my deah," and all her "r's" are soft like that; only it's too much trouble to write them for nobody but myself to see.) "Anyhow, it *is* so, between New York and Chicago people—that is, the people who count in Society. with a big S: and it was a great triumph for my

cousin to become the Three-Hundred-and-Ninety-Ninth in the Four Hundred. She did it by buying a Russian Prince."

"*Buying a——*"

"Yes, love, he was going to the highest bidder, and she bought him. That is, she entertained him so gorgeously and did so many nice things for him, that he posed as her property; and as everyone was dying to meet him, it *made* her. She'd been working killingly hard before that, for a whole year after taking her house on Fifth Avenue and building her cottage at Newport, but it was buying the Prince which did the trick. On the strength of that episode and its consequences, she went to Europe with very nice introductions, and as you know, dear, she has made some valuable as well as pleasant friends. To live up to them and her reputation, she will have to be busy for a while dropping a lot of old acquaintances."

"How horrid!" I couldn't help exclaiming, though Mrs. Ess Kay was going to be my hostess.

"Yes, it seems rather miserable to me, because I'm a weak, lazy, Southern thing, who would be right down sick, if I had to hurt any human being's feelings. Yet perhaps it looks fair to her. She's so ambitious, and she's worked so hard, she *has* deserved to succeed. As for poor me, she just regularly mesmerises me all through. She mesmerised me into coming up from Kentucky and visiting her this spring; then she mesmerised me into going with her to Europe. But I'm not sorry I went, for I've had a *right* good time."

"I'm so glad you went," said I, "because if you hadn't I shouldn't have met you. I'm sure I should love Kentucky if all the people there are like you. But these things you've been saying seem so odd. Do you mean to tell me that the people who lead Society in New York want

30 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

to keep their set limited to a certain number, and refuse to know others, even if they're extraordinarily clever and interesting?

"They don't like them to be too clever, because they call such people '*queer*'—that is, unless they happen to be 'lions' of some sort from England or other places abroad. Then, so long as they're not *American*, they welcome them with open arms."

"I'm glad Society isn't like that in England," I said. "There the *real* people—the people who have the right to make social laws, you know—are delighted with anyone who can amuse them. Of course, deep down in our hearts, we may be proud if we have old names, which have been famous for hundreds of years in one way or another; but we are so used, after all those centuries, to being *sure* of ourselves, that we just take our position for granted, and don't think much more about it. If people who haven't got quite the same position are gentlefolk, and amusing, or clever, or beautiful, or anything like that which really matters, why, we're only too pleased with them."

"That's all the difference in the world! You've been 'sure of yourselves for centuries.' You've said the last word, my dear. 'Out of the mouths of babes'—but Cousin Katherine's finished gushing to that silly old Mrs. Van der Windt. We mustn't dare discuss these things from our point of view any more. I reckon she would faint."

There are a good many young men on board, and some of them seemed to be quite devoted to Mrs. Ess Kay the first day out; but she was cold to them all, I couldn't think why, as some of them seemed very nice, and she had always appeared rather to like being with men. I asked Sally about it, but she laughed, and said I might

perhaps solve the mystery for myself when we were at Newport, if I remembered it then.

I never heard of such breakfasts and luncheons as they have on this ship, and the first menu I saw surprised me so much, that I couldn't believe they really had and could produce all those things if anybody was inconsiderate enough to ask for them. I hardly supposed there were so many things to eat in the world. But the captain heard me exclaiming to Sally, so he smiled, and told me to test the menu by ordering a bit of everything on it; he'd guarantee that nothing would be missed out. This was at breakfast the second day; and when he saw that I ate several dear little round things, shaped like cream-coloured doyleys, which are called pancakes (though they aren't a bit like ours) with some perfectly divine stuff named maple syrup, he said my taking such a fancy to American products was a sign that I should marry an American. What nonsense! As if I would dream of marrying, especially a foreigner. But for all that, pancakes and maple syrup are delicious. I've had them every day since for breakfast, after finishing a great orange four times the natural size, which isn't *really* an orange, because it's a grape fruit. You have it on your plate cut in two halves, with ice in each, and you scoop the inside out of a lot of tiny pockets, with a teaspoon. You think when you first see it, that you can't eat more than half; but instead, you eat every bit, and sometimes if the morning is hot, you even wish you could have more; though of course you wouldn't be so greedy as to ask.

It was on the second day out, too, that all my troubles began—and in a queer way which nobody could have guessed would lead to anything disagreeable.

In the afternoon I was reading in my deck-chair, drawn close to Mrs. Ess Kay's side, when that Mrs. Van der

32 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

Windt whom Sally called a silly old thing, toddled up and spoke to us. "Do come and watch them dancing in the steerage," she said. "It's such fun."

Mrs. Ess Kay likes sitting still on shipboard better than anything else, but it seems that Mrs. Van der Windt is so important that if all the Four Hundred Sally told me about were pruned away, except about twenty-five, she would be among the number left; so probably that is the reason why Mrs. Ess Kay takes long walks up and down the deck with her, though it makes her giddy to walk, and Mrs. Van der Windt is not in the least entertaining.

She got up now, like a lamb about to be led to the slaughter, except that she smiled bravely, which the lamb would not be able to bring itself to do. "Come, Betty," she said to me, "it will amuse you."

"Yes, do come, Lady Betty," repeated Mrs. Van der Windt; whereupon I obeyed, little knowing what I was laying up for myself.

Our deck is amidships. Aft, on a level with ours, is the second-class deck; and for'ward, down below, like looking into a pit, is the steerage. We walked to the rail, over which quite a number of men were leaning, to see what was going on, and several moved aside to give us room. I didn't like to take their places away, especially as they were laughing and enjoying themselves, and I could hear the sound of dance music coming up from below (such odd-sounding music!), but Mrs. Ess Kay murmured to me that I mustn't refuse. "American men are never so happy," she said, "as when they're giving up something for a woman. They're used to it."

And evidently she, as an American woman, was used to taking it. She and Mrs. Van der Windt slipped into the vacant spaces with a bare "thank you," and I had to

follow their example. We peered down over the rail; and there was a sight which would have been comical, if it hadn't been pathetic.

On rather a rough-looking deck, about twelve feet or more below us, a dense crowd was collected round two small squares, which they purposely left open. Besides those little squares, every inch was occupied. There wouldn't have been any more room for even a baby to sit down than there was in the Black Hole of Calcutta. In the crowd were old men, young men and boys, all poorly dressed; and old women, young women and girls, big and little. They wore crude, vivid colours, and more than half of them had bright handkerchiefs tied over their heads. They scarcely took any notice of the first-class passengers staring down superciliously or pityingly at their poor amusements; they were far too much absorbed in the dancing which was going on busily—I can't say gaily—in the two hollow squares. In one of these an elderly, pinched little man who looked almost half-witted, was monotonously scraping a battered fiddle, for two solemn couples to dance round and round, always on the same axis. But the other "dancing salon" was more lively. There a man dressed like a buffoon, with a tall hat, a lobster claw for a nose, a uniform with big red flannel epaulettes and pasteboard buttons covered with gold paper, was pretending to conduct the band. And what a band it was!

It consisted of four sailors, rather sheep-faced and self-conscious. One musical instrument was a wooden box rigged up with strings and a long handle; another was formed from a couple of huge soup-spoons tied together, on which the player beat rhythmically with a smaller spoon; the third was a poker, dangling from a string, banged heartily with an enormous nail as it swung to and

34 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

fro; the fourth was a queer, home-made drum, which looked as if it had been made out of a wooden bandbox.

Somehow they contrived to coax out music of a sort, and a few young men and girls were solemnly gyrating to it in a way to make you giddy even to watch. When a man thought he had had enough, or wanted to dance with another girl, he dropped his partner with alarming suddenness, bowed stiffly without smile or word, and left her *planté la*. It was evidently etiquette not to speak to your partner. At the end of a dance, the conductor with the lobster-claw nose looked up to our deck, bowing low with his hand on his heart, and then all the audience leaning over the rail began fumbling in their pockets if they were men, or opening their purses or gold bags if they were women. Down poured a shower of small silver and copper, little boys scrambling to pick it up, and hand it to the conductor, who would, Mrs. Van der Windt said, divide the money among the members of his quaint band.

I had a few shillings with me, and I'd been so much amused that I felt like being generous. Luckily, Mother couldn't see me, and scold! I took half a dozen coins—shillings and sixpences—and wrapping them hurriedly up in half the cover torn off a magazine I was reading, I aimed the little parcel to fall at the comic conductor's feet.

Generally I can throw fairly straight, for Stan took some pains with that part of my education when I was a small girl; but just at that instant someone standing next me moved, knocked me on the elbow, and spoilt my aim.

Instead of falling in front of Mr. Lobster-Claw, the parcel hit the ear of a very tall young man among the crowd below, who had been standing with his back to me. He turned quickly, not knowing what had happened, glanced up and caught my eyes, as I was looking down quite distressed.



"He turned around quickly, glanced up and caught my eyes, as I was looking down, quite distressed"



I had noticed his figure in the crush, because he towered nearly a head over everyone else, and I had a dim impression that he had good shoulders; but seeing his face gave me a great surprise.

It was as different from all the rest of the steerage faces as day is from night, and somehow it gave me quite a shock that such a man should be among those others, as if something must be wrong with the world, or it could not happen. I had even a guilty sort of thrill, as if I had no right to be well-dressed and prosperous, staring at him and his companions as though they were a show which we others paid to see—daring to amuse ourselves with the hard, strange conditions of their lives.

I've heard Mother say that good blood is sure to prove itself; that a gentleman can't look like a common man, even in rags. Stan disputes that theory with her, when he isn't too lazy, and wants to bet he could so disguise himself that she would take him for a green grocer or a fishmonger, who have the air of being commoner than other men, I think—at least in our village at Battlemead—because they wear fat tufts of curls frothing out over their foreheads from under their caps, which are always plaid and made of cloth.

Anyway, if Mother is right, this man in the steerage must have the bluest of blood in his veins, for I never saw one with clearer, nobler features. And yet, he doesn't give the impression of a broken-down gentleman who has gone the pace and paid for it by stumbling into the depths. I thought, as he looked up straight into my face that first time, (and I think still) that no face could be finer or more manly than his. Brown—deep brown it is, like bronze, and clean-shaved (not rough and scrubby), with dark grey eyes (I knew at once they were grey because the light struck into them) rimmed with black lashes, so long

36 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

you couldn't help noticing them; black eyebrows and hair short and sleek like Stan's, or any other well-groomed man one knows. Besides, commonness shows in people's mouths more than anywhere else; it's hard to define, but it's there; and this man's mouth is the best part of his face—unless it's the chin; or perhaps the nose, I'm not quite sure which, though I've thought a good deal about them all, because of the mystery of finding such a man in such an unsuitable place. It would be just the same if you saw a tall palm suddenly shooting up in the kitchen-garden, and couldn't find out how it had been planted there.

I'm afraid I must have shown how surprised I was, and admiring, too, maybe (how can one keep from admiring what is fine and noble, whether it's a strange person's face, or the profile of a mountain against a sky at sunset?) for the handsome steerage passenger looked at me a long, long instant as if he were as much astonished as I was; and yet with such a nice look, that instead of being annoyed, I couldn't help being pleased.

In the meantime the little packet of money had fallen on the deck; but though it had struck him from behind, he seemed to realise exactly what had happened, and stooping down, he picked it up. Then he raised his hand high, so that I could see he had the crumpled ball of paper in it; and edging his way determinedly but not at all roughly, through the crowd, he opened the parcel and gave the money to the conductor.

"What a splendid-looking man!" I said in a low voice to Mrs. Ess Kay. "Isn't it extraordinary that he should be in the steerage?"

"Come away, my dear child," she answered. "I can't have you standing here to be stared at by low creatures like that. The fellow's not in the *least* splendid-looking.

He's only a big, hulking animal. Don't take to making up romances about the steerage passengers, my love. They're not worth bothering your little head about, because if they weren't born for that sort of thing, they wouldn't be there, I assure you."

I didn't say anything more, though I was vexed with her, both for being so stupidly conventional, and for speaking to me in such a loud tone that she attracted people's attention.

We went back to our deck-chairs, and there was nothing to remind me of the little episode except the torn cover of my magazine, on which, I now remembered, Sally Woodburn had scrawled my name over and over again in pencil, just in idleness, while she and I had been talking that morning. If Mrs. Ess Kay had known, no doubt she would have been furious that a piece of paper with my name on it should have gone down into the steerage. But I didn't mind, for I remembered that the young man had opened the parcel, given the money to the conductor, and kept the cover, which probably he had soon after thrown overboard, or twisted up to light a pipe.

Nothing more happened that day; but there are two nice American girls on board, about my own age or a little older (they *seem* years older, for they are so charming and self-possessed) and Mrs. Ess Kay encourages me to like them, as they are in Mrs. Van der Windt's party. I grew quite well acquainted with them the third day out, and they asked me to go and watch the people in the steerage, who had a little trick dog which was lots of fun. I went, and saw the bronze young man again. He was standing with his arms folded across his blue-flannel-shirted chest, leaning against one of the supports of a kind of bridge, looking up towards the first-class deck. Our eyes met as they had before, and I was so absurd that I felt myself blush-

38 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

ing. I could have boxed my own ears; and though the trained dog really was a pet, I didn't stay long.

It is strange how certain kinds of eyes haunt one. You see them in the air, as if they were really looking at you—especially when you are just dropping off to sleep. I think grey ones do this more than others. Perhaps it is because they are more piercing.

But it was on the fourth day that the climax came,—the climax which has ended by upsetting me so much, and has made everything so uncomfortable.

The weather was glorious—all blue and gold after a sulky, leaden day—and there was dancing down on the steerage deck again. Though it was so fine, the water was not smooth like a floor as it had been at first, but broken into indigo waves ruffled irregularly with silver lace and edged with shimmering pearl fringe.

The same performance was going on, down there on the crowded deck, that I'd seen the first day, and Sally Woodburn and I, who had been walking—counting the times we went round, to make two miles—stopped to glance at the show.

"There's that good-looking man Cousin Katherine classifies as a hulking animal," said Sally. "I must really consult the dictionary for a definition of the word 'hulking.' I don't know whether it's a verb or adjective, do you?"

"No, I don't," said I. "But whichever it is, I'm sure he doesn't or isn't. He's a gentleman, and something strange has happened or he wouldn't be there. I do think it's a shame. It must be horrible."

"Don't you think Cousin Katherine knows more about such persons than you?" asked Sally, and there was such a funny quaver in her voice that I turned to see what it meant. She was laughing, but whether at me or at Mrs.

Ess Kay, or at the man with the Lobster-Claw nose, I couldn't tell; and before I could answer her question by asking another, something happened which put the whole conversation out of my mind.

The ship curtseyed to a wave of more importance than any that had gone before, then righted herself quickly. We slid a little, everybody who could catching hold of the rail or of some friend's arm, laughing; but down on the steerage deck there rose a cry which wasn't laughter.

"Child overboard!" someone screamed. And I realised with a horrid feeling like suffocation, that a tiny boy down below, who had climbed up on the rail to watch the dancing, was missing.

It was a woman who had screamed, and everything followed so quickly that my mind was confused, as if a whirlwind had rushed through it and blown all the impressions on top of one another, in a heap. There was a babel of voices on the steerage deck, more cries, and shouts, and screams, and people surged in a solid wave toward the rail to look over. But out of that wave sprang one figure separating itself from the other atoms; and then I heard myself give a cry, too, for the man who had been in my thoughts had thrown off his coat and vaulted over the rail into the sea.

"Jove! he'll be caught by the propeller!" I heard somebody near me say.

I turned sick. The thought of his life being crushed out while we all looked on, helpless, was awful. The sea was terrible enough in itself—the great, wide, merciless, blue water, which sparkled so coldly, and laughed in its power—but to be crunched up by the jaws of a monster—I shut my eyes, and couldn't open them until I heard men saying the strong wind to starboard might save him. I believe I must have been unconsciously praying, and my

40 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

hands were clasped so tightly together that afterwards my fingers ached.

People on our deck made a rush towards the stern, on the port side, for the ship had been steaming so fast that already we were forging away from the child who had fallen and the man who had jumped after him. Sally and I were carried along with the rush. She seized me by the hand, but we didn't speak a word. If dear friends, instead of two strangers in a far remote sphere of life, had been in deadly danger, I don't think the sickness at my heart could have been worse. I would have given years if at that moment I could have had the magical power to stop the ship instantly, with one wave of my hand.

But it was being stopped, by another power than mine. I felt the deck shiver under my feet, like a thoroughbred horse, pulled on to his haunches. The accident had been seen from the bridge; an order to stop the ship had been telegraphed down to the engine-room, and obeyed. Still, when Sally Woodburn and I had been carried by the crowd far enough towards the stern to look out over the blue wilderness of water we were leaving behind, the ship's heart hadn't ceased its throb, throb, to which we had all grown so accustomed in the last few days.

"He's got the child!" exclaimed Sally. "See, he's hauling the little creature on to his back with one hand, and swimming with the other. Glorious fellow!"

Yes, there were the two heads bobbing like black corks in the tossing waves, close together. I pictured so vividly what my sensations would be, if I were down there, a mere speck in that vast expanse of blue, that I almost tasted salt water in my mouth, and felt the choking tingle of it in my lungs.

Then, suddenly the ship's heart ceased to beat; and the unaccustomed stillness was as startling as an unexpected

noise. A boat shot down from the davits, with several sailors on board; a few seconds later they were rowing away towards those two hobbing black corks, and I loved them as they bent to their oars.

I can't remember breathing once, or even winking, until I saw the child being lifted into the boat, and the man climbing in after. What a shout went up from the ship! Sally clapped her pretty, dimpled hands, but I only let my breath go at last, in a great sigh.

There was such a crush that I couldn't see them when they came on board, but there was more shouting and hurrahing, and men slapped each other on the shoulder and laughed.

Throb, throb went the machinery again, and there was no sign that anything out of the monotonous round had happened, except in the excited way that people talked. Several men we knew paid a visit to the steerage, and came back with stories which flew about from group to group in the first-class cabin, and no doubt the second too.

It seemed that the little boy who had fallen into the sea was the only son of his mother, a widow. They were Swedes, and the woman, who is on her way to the States to try and find a place as a servant, was quite prostrated with the agonising suspense she had suffered. As for the little boy himself, he was not seriously the worse for his experience. The doctor was with him, and said that he would be as well as ever in a few hours. A subscription for the mother and child had already been started among the first-class passengers, and would probably be made up to quite a good sum.

"But what is going to be done for the one who saved the little boy's life?" I asked the man who was telling me the news, a Mr. Doremus, who is a cousin of Mrs. Van der Windt's, very full of fun, and good natured.

"A nice little pedestal, labelled 'Our Hero,' will be built out of the ladies' admiration, and given to him to pose on," said Mr. Doremus. "However, I must say for the gentleman,—though I've only seen him dripping wet, and shaking himself like a big dog,—he didn't give me the impression of being the sort of chap to say 'thank you' for the perch."

"Of course he isn't!" said I. "But I do think it's a shame if he's left out when subscriptions are going round. Of course he must be poor, or he wouldn't be travelling in the steerage. Something ought to be done to show him that the passengers admire his bravery—not anything *fulsome*, but something *nice*."

"I guess you don't know the American disposition yet, as well as you will after you've wrestled with it on its native heath for a few months," remarked Mr. Doremus in his quaint way. "That chap down in the steerage *is* an American, whatever else he may be, or I'll eat my best hat; and I wouldn't for five cents be in the deputation to present him with the something 'not fulsome but nice' on a little silver salver. I should expect him to give me the frosty mitt."

This expression struck me as being so funny that I burst out laughing, though I had to stop and think for a second before I could quite see what Mr. Doremus really meant; but I wouldn't forget my point in a laugh.

"Perhaps it wouldn't do to offer money," I went on. "Suppose we got up a subscription to buy him a second-class passage for the rest of the way. That would show appreciation, wouldn't it?"

"It would," replied Mr. Doremus, gravely, "and if you'll start the subscription, Lady Betty, it'll go like wildfire."

"Very well, then, I will," said I. "Though I'd rather someone else did it."

"It wouldn't be so popular from any other quarter. I'll help you. We'll go floating around together and pass the plate; and if you like, I'll do the talking."

I agreed to this, and if I'd thought about it at all, I should have supposed that Mrs. Ess Kay would be as pleased as Punch with such an arrangement, because Mr. Doremus, as a relative of Mrs. Van der Windt's, is the only man on board to whom she makes herself agreeable. It appears that he has started several fashions in New York, the most important being to drive in some park they have there, without a hat. But probably if the truth were known, he lost it, like the fox that tried to make his friends chop off their tails.

Mrs. Ess Kay had gone to her stateroom soon after lunch, as the motion of the ship had given her a headache, and I didn't happen to be near Sally Woodburn; so I said "yes" to Mr. Doremus on the impulse of the moment, without stopping to think whether I ought to ask permission first.

We had great fun going about, for Mr. Doremus was so witty and said such amusing things to the people he begged of, that I could hardly speak for laughing, and everyone else laughed too. I wished that he wouldn't put me forward always, and say it was my idea, and I had started the subscription; but he argued that I must sacrifice myself for the success of the Charity, just as I would at home, if I had to work off damaged pincushions or day before yesterday's violets at a bazaar. Of course, not being out, I've never sold anything at bazaars, but Victoria is continually doing it in the Season, and she makes quite a virtue of forcing perfect strangers to "stand and deliver," as she calls it. This seemed much the same sort of thing to me, and so I felt nice and virtuous, too, as Vic does when she comes home with a new frock torn and

44 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

stepped on, and lies in bed late next day, with Thompson to brush her hair, and me to read to her.

People were very kind, and though they laughed a great deal, they gave so much that before we'd been half the rounds, Mr. Doremus said we had more than enough for our friend. He wanted to know if I would like to "hit the nail on the head" and settle matters at once, by arranging with the purser for a second-class cabin to be put at the hero's disposal. I wanted him to do that part alone, but he pretended to be shy, and said he had grown to depend so entirely on my co-operation, that he felt unequal to undertaking any responsibility without it. He told the same story to the purser that he had told others, about my being the one to start the subscription, and he wanted me to sign a kind of letter which he wrote, to the effect that the passengers had chosen this way of testifying their appreciation of a gallant deed, and so on; but I wouldn't, and he stopped teasing at last, when he saw that I was going to be vexed.

After the business was what Mr. Doremus called "fixed up," he took me back to my chair on deck. Sally wasn't in her place, and as I was wondering what had become of her, the dressing-for-dinner bugle went wailing over the ship like a hungry Banshee. I said to myself that Sally must have gone early because her frock was to be particularly elaborate. I felt conscious of having heaps of interesting things to tell, and I understood exactly what Victoria means when she says she's in one of her "pretty and popular moods."

I danced into our stateroom, where only a drawn curtain covers the open doorway. No one was there, and the cabin was so quiet that it seemed to greet me with a warning "S-sh!"

Down fell my spirits with a dull thud, though I didn't

know why. My joyousness changed to what storybook writers describe as a "foreboding of disaster"; but when I have it, it's generally connected with a lecture from Mother, so I know it only as a sneaky, "I haven't eaten the cream" sort of feeling.

Just as I had begun to take off my frock, Louise appeared at the door which leads into the little drawing-room. She said that if I pleased, Madame would be glad to see me in her cabin. I hurried across to the other state-room opposite ours, and there found Mrs. Ess Kay, in a gorgeously embroidered pink satin Japanese thing, which she calls a kimona. She was sitting in a chair in front of the makeshift dressing-table, putting on her rings, and claspng bracelets on her wrists with vicious snaps. Sally, who hadn't begun to dress, was standing up, looking almost cross; that is, with different features from hers, she might have succeeded in looking cross.

"Sit down, Betty, please; I want to talk to you," said Mrs. Ess Kay.

Somehow, it always makes me feel stiff when she "Betty's" me, as my old nurse says it does with your ears if you eat broad beans.

"If I do, I shall be late for dinner," said I, just as if a minute ago I hadn't been dying to pour out my news.

"Never mind dinner, my dear girl," replied Mrs. Ess Kay, with an air which I do believe she tried to copy from Mother. "What I have to say is more important than dinner. I hope what I have been hearing isn't true."

"That depends upon what it was," I retorted, disguising my pertness with a smile.

"Don't think I've been tattling," said Sally. "Whatever my faults may be, I haven't a Rubber Neck."

I didn't know in the least what she meant; but afterwards she explained that if your neck is always pivoting

round, to pry into other people's affairs, it is a Rubber Neck, and I shall remember the expression to tell Stan when I go home. He will like to add it to his collection of strange beasts.

Mrs. Ess Kay partly turned her back upon Sally. "The dear Duchess" (she always speaks of Mother in that way,) "the dear Duchess has entrusted you to my charge, Betty, and I don't know what I shall do if you take advantage of me by playing naughty tricks whenever I am incapacitated from chaperoning you for half an hour."

One would have thought I was a trained dog! I simply stared with saucer eyes, and she went on. "Mrs. Collingwood came in to enquire for my headache, and she told me that you have been running about begging for money to give to a common man in the steerage. I sent instantly for Sally, but she either knows, or pretends to know nothing."

I rushed into explanations, sure that when Mrs. Ess Kay understood, I should be pronounced "not guilty." But to my surprise, her chin grew squarer and squarer, and her eyes harder and lighter, till they looked almost white.

"I don't want to be harsh," she said at last, in the tone people use when they're walking on the ragged edge of their patience, "but for the Duchess's sake, I must be firm. It was very wrong of Tommy Doremus to let you make yourself so conspicuous. This may lead to your being dreadfully misunderstood and putting yourself and all of us in a false position. The man may be a *butcher* for all you know."

"His complexion isn't pink and white enough for a butcher's," said I. "Besides, I thought that in America one man was as good as another."

"You were never more mistaken in your life, my dear

girl; and the sooner you correct such an impression the better, or you may get into serious trouble from which I can't save you. If the steerage man isn't a butcher, he's probably a professional swimmer, and the whole thing was a *scheme*, to advertise himself. In fact, I am pretty certain from what Mrs. Collingwood said, it *was* that. And I want you to promise me solemnly that you will *not* go around helping to advertise the creature any more. If you say you admire such a person, people will think you're like the Matinée Girls, who wait at stage doors and run after actors."

I was so angry, that I "talked back"; and it finally ended in our relations being somewhat strained at dinner, which ruined my appetite, until a peculiarly soothing iced pudding came on.

Afterwards, Mrs. Ess Kay was cool to Mr. Doremus, and would have been cold, I think, if he weren't Mrs. Van der Windt's cousin. He lounged up to our place on deck to give me the news that the Third Class Hero (as he calls the bronze young man) refused to be Second Class. He had asked permission to give the cabin offered him to the child whose life he had saved, and the mother.

"It's for you to say yes or no, Lady Betty," announced Mr. Doremus, "because it's your show; you set the top spinning."

"She is to have nothing more to do with the affair," Mrs. Ess Kay answered for me quickly. "She is very sorry she commenced it, and has lost the small interest she felt in the beginning. I do hope that tramp, or beggar, or whatever he is, hasn't gotten it in his conceited head that Lady Betty Bulkeley has bothered herself about his insignificant affairs, or he'll be thrusting himself upon her notice in some way which will be very disagreeable for *Me*, as her guardian."

48 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

"Well, he has sent a message of thanks to everyone concerned," said Mr. Tommy Doremus. "I don't know whether he put Lady Betty at the top of the list or not, and if that's the way you feel about our nice little stunt, I expect it's just as well not to enquire further."

All the rest of the trip has been spoiled for me, by the hateful way in which the excitement of that day ended, and it does seem too bad, for everything might have been so nice.

Whether people really do make ill-natured jokes or not, I don't know; but anyhow, Mrs. Ess Kay keeps hinting that they do, which is almost as disagreeable for me. She says that they have nicknamed the bronze man "Lady Betty's Hero"; and this has made me so self-conscious that I can't bear to go near the part of the deck where you look over into the steerage, for fear some silly creatures may think I'm trying to see him. I feel as if I had been a conspicuous idiot, and I'm so uncomfortable with Mrs. Ess Kay now, that I expect to be wretched in her house. I can't talk it over even with Sally, because, after all, she's Mrs. Ess Kay's cousin. I wish I had a nose two inches long, and green hair, and then perhaps Mother and Vic would have let me stop at home.

Still, I can't help taking an interest in ship life, and now that it's the morning of the last day on board, I look back on it all as if it ought to have been even more fun than it was.

I enjoyed hearing about the Marconigrams when they came; it seemed like living in a tale by Stan's favourite, Jules Verne, to have messages come flying to us in mid-ocean, like invisible carrier pigeons. I enjoyed having Mr. Doremus tell me about his luck in the big pools, when the men bet on the day's run; and I'm afraid I rather revelled in seeing a row on deck one evening, when one man accused

another of being a cheat and a professional gambler, and almost cried about some money he'd lost. If I had been the first man, I wouldn't have trusted the other in the beginning, because he had fat lips, greasy black curls, and wicked eyes so close together you felt they might run into one, if he winked too hard on a hot day. But if I *had* been so stupid as to trust him, I would have been ashamed to make a fuss afterwards. I think people ought to be sporting.

I liked the "Captain's dinner," too, in honour of the last night on board, with the flags and paper-flower decorations, the band playing military music, the dishes on the menu named after famous generals, and the stewards filing in, in a long procession, when the salon had been darkened, each carrying a bright-coloured, illuminated ice, and cake with tiny English, and American, and German flags stuck into the top.

Yes, I liked everything, except—but now it is nearly over. America is just round the corner of the world.

III

ABOUT NEW YORK

AFTER you have seen nothing but water for days, it's odd how excited you are on seeing a little land. Just a little, little land, and not at all interesting to look at; a strip of grey sand, or a patch of green grass; and you have been only a few days away from such things, yet somehow you want to jump up and down and shout for joy.

More than half the first-class passengers on our ship were Americans, coming home, and I suppose they had gone away because they wanted to go. If they had liked, they could have stopped in their own country as well as not; and I heard some of them saying during the voyage that if they could, they would spend nine months out of the year in Paris; but they made as much fuss over the first lump of sand we saw as if we were discovering the North Pole. Some of them had taken this trip a dozen times or maybe more, but anyone would have thought it was as new to them as to me.

It seemed as if I were sailing, in a dream, to a dream land, and everything would be a dream, till I found myself waking up at home. If anyone had pinched me, I hardly believe I should have felt it, as I stood by the rail, while we steamed towards New York. We passed a big fort, and some neat little houses, which looked like officers' quarters. There were Long Island and Coney Island, which Mr. Doremus said I must be "personally conducted" to see, some day when I felt young and frivolous;

and by and by I heard people exclaiming "There's Liberty—there she is! Bless the dear old girl!"

While I was wondering whether they were talking of a lady, or a ship, I caught sight of a majestic giantess, obligingly holding a torch up to light the world. Then I knew it was the Statue which I had read about.

"What do you think of her?" asked Mr. Doremus.

"She's a *grande dame*," I said. "Now I know why your girls hold themselves so well. They're trying to live up to the Ideal American Woman. But she isn't as big as I thought she would be. Nothing ever is as big as you think it's going to be, especially when Americans have told you about it; for one has been brought up to believe that their big things are bigger than anybody else's in the whole world."

"So they are," said Mr. Doremus, "only where all the things are big, you don't notice them, for the high grass. And over there's some of the grass."

He pointed, and I saw a great number of enormous objects, shaped like chimneys, and apparently about a mile high, scattered aimlessly along the horizon, which was a brilliant, limpid blue.

"What are they?" I asked. "Great, strange, factories of some sort?"

"No. Houses where pretty women live, and offices where men make the money for them to live on."

"You must be joking. Women would be afraid to perch up there in the sky. Besides, it would take too long to go up and down."

"Nothing takes long in America. And it comes natural to our women to perch up high. Statues aren't the only things we buy pedestals for, this side of the porpoise-tank. You just wait and see."

"I don't need to wait to see that American men are

52 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

nice to women," said I; "perhaps no nicer than Englishmen, really, only you seem to take a great deal more trouble. Fancy all the men at Mrs. Van der Windt's table drawing lots every night for the right to sit by her and the two Miss Eastmans; I don't believe it would have occurred to Englishmen. The ones who *really* wanted to sit there, would have tried to get to their places first, that's all. I do think it was pretty of you."

"Wasn't it? especially supposing none of us particularly wanted—but never mind. Talking of pretty things, here are the docks."

They were big enough to satisfy even my expectations, and I wished that I'd insisted on being taken by someone long ago, to visit the London docks, so that I might know whether ours were better or worse. One never thinks of going to see things at home; but I began to suspect that I might some day be stabbed with jealous pangs and need to be stuffed with a lot of facts about England—though until I knew Americans I've been in the habit of thinking facts the least interesting things in the world. They seemed like chairs to sit on or floors to walk on without noticing what you were doing; but I suppose it might be awkward without chairs and floors.

Soon we were near enough to New York to see the tremendous chimney things clearly, and they sharpened the impression that I was sailing straight into a dream. There could be no such things in the real world; they wouldn't be possible. But the dream felt very interesting and intense all of a sudden, and I didn't want to wake up from it just then, in spite of Mrs. Ess Kay.

The tall shapes were bright and vivid now, as giant hollyhocks growing in irregular rows. Still, they did not look one bit like houses, or offices where people could work without going stark, staring mad. I got a queer idea

in my head that the houses themselves must be buried deep underground, like bulbs, with only their towers sticking up.

The next thing that happened in the dream, was slowing majestically into our own dock, and that was wonderful. The whole place was alive with faces, mostly pretty girls' faces, under fascinating hats, gay as flowers in a flower-show; parterre above parterre of brilliant blossoms; and they had all been grown in honour of us.

There was a wild waving of handkerchiefs on the ship, and a frantic fluttering of white among the flowers, as if a flock of butterflies had been frightened up into the air. Still we were a long time getting in, and I grew quite impatient; but finally Louise, who had attended to my packing, took charge of my handbag, my sunshade and coat, with her mistress's and Miss Woodburn's things. The moment had come to bid the ship good-bye.

"Now," said Mrs. Ess Kay, slipping her arm into mine, "I wonder, dear child, if you would mind being left alone to deal with the custom-house people? You'd stand under your own letter 'B,' of course."

"Oh, Katherine, do you think even Letter B, which sounds so like a warning to young men, a proper chaperon for a Duchess's daughter?" exclaimed Sally Woodburn.

I laughed, but Mrs. Ess Kay didn't. She evidently considers things connected with the American Custom House no fit subject for frivolity. She went on, without answering; "I'm under 'K,' and Sally 'W.' We'll both have all we can attend to wrestling with our own Fiends, and Louise will be just as busy. But you're a British subject, on a short visit to this country, and they won't be as diabolical to you, dear. I did all the swearing necessary for you in the saloon, with my own, when the tiresome man came on board, and there's really nothing left for

54 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

you to bother with on the dock, except to open your boxes and say you have nothing to declare."

I was glad that since profanity had been called for in the saloon, owing to the tiresomeness of a man, it had been Mrs. Ess Kay who was obliged to give vent to it, not I; but I felt rather defrauded that I couldn't have heard, and I wondered if she had gone so far as to mention "damn." All I said out loud, however, was that I was sure I could manage very well in the docks, and Mrs. Ess Kay appeared much relieved. "That's perfectly sweet of you, Betty," she said, launching a daggery glance at poor, inoffensive Sally, for some reason which I couldn't understand. "I hope you won't think I'm horrid not to have asked you to label your baggage 'K,' so it could go with mine. It's better not, for *everyone* concerned; I'll explain afterwards *why*; and Louise shall take you to 'B.'"

Louise did take me to "B," which they had thoughtfully printed very large and black on a wooden wall of the dock, in a row with all the other letters of the alphabet. A good many people from the ship were collecting beneath theirs, as if they were animals getting ready to join the procession for the ark, under the heading of Cat or Elephant, as the case might be; and they all seemed worried and apprehensive, as you do at the dentist's, even when you try to distract your mind by looking at the pictures in *Punch*.

Louise put my bag on the wooden floor, and folded my coat on it. "Miladi will do well to sit down," said she. "It may be that the baggage do not come *immédiatement*." With this she bustled away to the Louise rabbit warren, wherever it was, leaving me to the tender mercies of fellow "B's," who began to swarm round me and buzz distractedly.

I subsided on the bag, which was very like sitting on the floor; but it was stifling down there among people's feet; besides, mine soon got "pins and needles"; so presently I popped up like a Jack out of his Box, and almost knocked off a man's nose with the crown of my hat.

I said "I beg your pardon!" though what the nose was doing so near the top of my head I couldn't conceive, until its owner (fumbling with one hand for his handkerchief to staunch a drop of blood, and snatching off his straw hat with the other, already full of notebooks and things) blurted out abruptly: "Are you Lady Bulkeley?"

I *was* surprised!

"No," said I. "I'm Lady Betty Bulkeley."

"That's all right," said the nose man, as if he forgave me for being myself. "I didn't know but you'd want to be called Lady Bulkeley by strangers."

"It isn't my name," I said, more puzzled than ever. I would have tried to be dignified, as he was a perky-looking young man in an alpaca coat; but when you have just made a person's nose bleed with your hat, it would seem unfeeling to be too frigid,—though I believe an application of ice is supposed to be beneficial.

"Shall I call you Lady Betty then?" asked the man, patting his nose with his handkerchief, which luckily for my nerves had already a pattern of pink dots on it.

"I don't see why you should call me anything," said I.

With that, he produced a card, with a whole string of words printed on it, and poked it under my eyes. "I was just going to introduce myself," he said. "I represent *The New York Flashlight*, and I've been sent by my paper to get something from you, if you'll oblige me."

"Something from me?" I repeated, bewildered. "Is it anything to do with the Customs? I've nothing to declare."

"Just tell me, please, something about your family. Your brother's the Duke of Stanforth, isn't he?" (He pronounced it "Dook.")

"Yes, but——"

"Thanks. Young and unmarried, isn't he?"

"Yes. But——"

"Ever been on this side?"

"No. But——"

"He'll come some day, won't he? Most unmarried Dukes do."

"I don't know, I'm sure. Really, I think——"

"Excuse me. You're going to stay with Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox, I believe. Will you make a lengthy visit?"

"I don't——"

"You must have met one or two of our smartest young men on board. What do you think of them as compared with Englishmen?"

Long before this I had made up my mind that he couldn't have anything to do with the Customs, or if he did, that it was no wonder Mrs. Ess Kay had been driven to swearing in the saloon. I was glad now that his nose was bleeding, and I turned my back upon him, because it was the most emphatic gesture I could think of. But as I faced round the other way, wondering if my luggage would ever come, another man pushed through the "B's" who had got their boxes, and almost bounded into a foot of unoccupied space in front of me.

"Lady Bulkeley?" he shot at me, like history repeating itself; only he pronounced me as if my name were founded on my size and weight.

This time I didn't answer. I simply stood at bay, and stared, trying to look as much like Mother as possible. But the new man didn't seem to mind this in the least, so apparently my effort was not a success.

"I'm *The Evening Bat*," he remarked hurriedly, with an air of valuing his time at so much a second.

I was sorry he was a bat, for I've always been fond of bats, they are such soft, grey, velvet things; and I should have liked to tell him that he was much more like a chicken hawk, only that would have been vulgar; and, besides, I didn't intend to pose as chicken to his hawk. By way of not letting myself be gobbled up, I remained silent; but I couldn't help starting when a voice behind me exclaimed: "Ah, there, my chappie. You're welcome to the milk. I've skimmed off the cream. Ta, ta."

It was the *Flashlight* flashing at the *Evening Bat*.

The creature was not blinded, however. He seemed difficult to disconcert. The only response he made was to grin, and push his hat a little farther back on his head. An inch more, and it must have slid down over his collar—which was so low in the neck in front that it gave me the creeps.

"There's plenty of milk and roses, too, I guess," said he, staring in such a way that I blushed, and was vexed with myself for blushing. I peered anxiously about, hoping to see a face I knew, even ever so slightly, which might be summoned to the rescue. But all the "B's" were passionately minding their own business, and while I was wishing that Mr. Doremus began with a "B" instead of a "D," I caught the eyes of a man looking straight at me. The very nicest eyes, and with an expression in them that filled me with joy!

They said: "Do let me come and get rid of that fellow for you," and mine said: "Yes—yes—yes. Please come at once."

So the Eyes came, without waiting for more; and it was the Hero of the steerage who brought them. That was the reason I'd telegraphed "yes, yes"; for I thought:

58 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

"He saved a little boy, why shouldn't I trust him, without an introduction, to save me?"

"Look here," said the bronze man to the *Evening Bat*, "I've got just five minutes to spare. You can have them if you like."

The *Evening Bat* looked at him, crossly at first; then his sharp little face seemed turning into a point of admiration. "By Jehosaphat!" he ejaculated. "Home-made goods will get the preference over British this time, duty or *no duty*."

I couldn't think what either of them meant, though at first I was afraid my man intended the other to understand that the five minutes would be devoted to knocking him down, or something else violent, as a punishment for impertinence to a defenceless foreigner. But my mind was almost instantly relieved, for the two men walked off together quite amicably, and stood talking at a distance.

A moment later, one of my boxes went by, looking very fat and friendly, on the shoulders of a porter, who apparently had no head. I rushed out, and seized it—not the head, but the box; so there was something encouraging; but I had two pieces of luggage to wait for still.

Most of the other "B's" were more fortunate about getting their things; nevertheless, they seemed far from easy in their minds, and though they protested almost tearfully that they'd nothing whatever to declare, stern persons in uniform stirred up their boxes as I used to do with the nursery pudding, when all the plums had sunk to the bottom.

I was very tired and very hot, hotter than I'd supposed people could be, except in a Turkish bath; and I was beginning to be hungry too, for I'd lunched principally off the Statue of Liberty and Sky-scrapers, which were more filling than lasting, as a meal.

I fanned myself with my handkerchief as well as I could, and felt sure I was slowly getting appendicitis; because whenever Americans feel uncomfortable in any way, it seems almost certain to turn eventually into that, probably on account of the climate. Would my other boxes *never* come? I thought. Most of the "B's" were going home. They had homes, lucky people, and if they liked, they could presently have tea.

"World without tea,
Ah me!"

When I was small, and my nurse talked on Sundays about heaven and hell, making the one sound incredibly dull, the other incredibly painful, I used to think that I'd rather go to neither, but just be stuffed, like Mother's Blenheim, Beau Brummel, whose soul I fancied had leave to stop in his body so long as moth and rust did not corrupt. He seemed rather out of things, though, poor dear, standing forever in the same position in a glass case, with one paw up begging for something which nobody gave, while the years dragged on; and I'd begun to feel as if I were falling into his state, when I was roused from a stupid dream by the man of the steerage suddenly looming over me.

"I beg your pardon," said he, taking off his hat, and speaking in a nice American voice, as nice for a man as Sally Woodburn's is for a woman. "Please don't suppose I mean to be rude or intrusive, but I wanted to tell you that I think you won't be annoyed again; and—just one thing more. May I thank you for your goodness on shipboard? It brightened what would otherwise have been a grim experience."

Blind Mrs. Ess Kay to pronounce this man not a gentleman, just because some strange circumstances had

60 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

forced him to travel in the steerage! I did wish that, without his knowing it, I could have slipped into his pocket my thirty pounds!

"Oh, I did nothing," I answered. "It was the other people who did everything—the little that was done. It's I who have to thank you, for taking that person away. He and the other, who came just before, were so rude."

"They didn't mean to be rude," he said. "They wanted you to tell them something which they could put into their papers, and they live by doing that kind of thing. I did the best I could with them, but I wish I could have saved you from being annoyed in the beginning. I hesitated at first, for fear you might misunderstand, and think me as bad as they were; but I wish I hadn't now."

"After what I saw you do, at sea, I couldn't possibly have misunderstood," I said.

"Thank you for saying that," he returned, "though for what I did then, I don't deserve any praise. It was done on the impulse; and I'm used to salt water. As a child, I lived close to it for a time, in California, and swimming came almost as natural as walking. But I'm not here to talk about myself. It was only to tell you how grateful I was, and am, and shall continue to be, for your kindness on the ship. I couldn't go without speaking of this; and there's something now I'd like to ask. You won't be offended?"

"If it's something you want to tell me, I know it isn't the sort of thing which could offend," I said; but I didn't say it as calmly as it looks when written. I stammered a little, and got the words tangled up; and I felt my face growing hotter than ever.

"I thank you again. It's only this. If, while you're over on this side the water, there's ever any way in which a man—a man who'd be as respectful as your footman,

and loyal as your friend—could possibly serve you—I wish you would let me be that man. I know it seems now as if such a thing couldn't happen; but nothing's quite impossible in this queer world, and—and anyhow I shall always be ready. You could trust me——”

“I know that!” I couldn't resist breaking in.

“I'm—employed for the present at a club in New York. If you'd send word to Jim Brett, at the Manhattan Club, there's nothing under the sun that Jim Brett wouldn't do for you, from finding a lost dog, to taking a message across the world.”

“First I must catch my dog before I can lose him,” I answered, laughing. “But if I do, or—or there's anything else, I shan't forget.”

“That's a true promise, then; and I have to thank you for the third time. Now, I'm not going to trouble you any longer. Good-bye.”

Without stopping to think who he was, or who I was, I held out my hand, and his good-looking brown face grew red. He took the hand, pressed it hard, once; dropped it abruptly; turned on his heel and walked away, without looking back.

I was so interested in going over the conversation in my mind, that I forgot to feel like Beau Brummel with one paw up in his glass case; and though I daresay ten minutes had passed, it hardly seemed two, when a wonderful little black image in the shape of a boy came sidling up to me, all rolling white eyes, and red grin, like a nice Newfoundland puppy. He had some newspapers tucked under his arm, but in his hand was a small basket of peaches almost too beautiful to be real. But then, weren't they—and wasn't he—part of my dream?

He grinned so much more that I was afraid his round black face would break into two separate halves, and

62 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

looking at me with his woolly head on one side, he thrust out the basket.

"Fur you, missy," said he, with a funny little accent, for all the world like Sally Woodburn's.

"They can't be for me. There must be a mistake," said I, wishing there wasn't, for the peaches did look delicious; and there were two rosebuds lying on top of the basket; one pink, the other white. "I don't know anyone who could have sent them."

"The gent knows you, you bet, missy," replied the image. "He giv me a quarter and axed if I know'd my alphabet 'nuf to find letter 'B,' an' tote dese yere to the prettiest young lady I'd ever seed. Most wite ladies, dey looks all jes' alike, to me, but you's different, missy: an' I reckon de tings must be fur you."

I had a horrible vision of this compliment proceeding from *The Flashlight* or *The Evening Bat*. "What was the gentleman like?" I asked.

"Like mos' any gent, missy, 'cept that he was powerful tall, an' I reckon if he keeps right on like he's doin' now, he'll get mos' as brown as me some day."

Then I knew that I was safe in taking the present; so I did, and gave the comical black image two or three little round white metal things I'd got from the purser when I changed some English money. I didn't know how much they were, and they looked ridiculously small, but he seemed pleased.

When he had run off, I turned my attention to the peaches. They were so big that there was room only for four in the basket, and they seemed dreadfully pathetic considering from whom they had come.

That poor fellow must be almost penniless or he wouldn't have been in the steerage; yet he had bought peaches for me, and given a "quarter"—whatever that was—to his

quaint black doll of a messenger. I could have cried; nevertheless, I ate two of the peaches, and reluctantly presented the other two, which I couldn't possibly eat, to a gloomy "B" child, sitting on a shawl-strap.

As if for a reward of virtue, just as I had disposed of my leavings, and stuck the roses into my belt, the last of the luggage arrived. There were two Custom House men near to choose from, and as I've heard, in choosing between two evils it's better to choose the less, I smiled beseechingly at the smaller man who had just crammed a pile of lace blouses into the box of a lady with nervous prostration.

Whether he was sated with cruelty, or whether he was naturally of an angelic disposition, I shall probably never know now; but the fact remains that, instead of turning out the Fiend I'd been led to expect, he was one of the most considerate men I've ever met. He wouldn't even let me unlock my own boxes, but took the keys and opened them for me himself. (Didn't an executioner braid the hair of some queen whose head he was going to chop off? I must look the incident up, when I have time.) Anyway, I thought of it when the Custom House man was being so polite; but the analogy didn't go any farther, for my head never came off at all, and two of the boxes remained unopened.

"You're English, aren't you?" he asked, and when I said yes, and that I was only on a short visit, he treated my belongings as if they were sacred. If he disturbed anything, he laid it back nicely, keeping up a running conversation as he went on. I told him that Englishwomen might bring home all the pretty clothes they liked from other countries, and that I considered it most ungallant in such a chivalrous nation as America to deny ladies a few Paris dresses.

64 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

"Do you happen to know, miss, what's the income-tax in your country?" he asked, tenderly putting back some yellow hairpins which had fallen out of a box of mine.

"Dear me, no," I exclaimed. "But I think it's sometimes more than a shilling in the pound; I've heard my brother say so; and as for the death duties, it's more than your life's worth to die."

"A-ah!" said the nice man. "We haven't got any income-tax on this side, and folks can die in peace, whenever they please. I guess that kind of evens things up, don't it?"

I didn't know what to answer, so I thanked him for his kindness, and we parted the best of friends.

Mrs. Ess Kay appeared so quickly afterwards, that it almost seemed as if she must have been lying in wait. She was looking pale and shattered, and Louise, following close behind, was positively haggard. Only Sally had weathered the storm without being outwardly the worse for wear; but even she didn't look as good-natured as usual.

"How have you got along, you poor, deserted darling?" affectionately enquired Mrs. Ess Kay, undismayed by a fixed gaze from Sally, which apparently signified reproach.

"It wasn't very bad, and I've quite enjoyed myself," I replied, forgetting some tedious moments in the light of others not tedious, and hoping that the roses in my belt might pass unnoticed.

Fortunately they did, otherwise I should have been in a difficulty; for I should have hated to vulgarise the little episode by putting it into story form for Mrs. Ess Kay; and presumably roses have not been taught to grow wild on the New York docks, although they say Americans

are so very luxurious in their tastes one would hardly be surprised at anything.

A beautiful electric carriage, bigger than a brougham, was waiting for us, and we left Louise, with a butler or some other man servant out of livery, to wrestle with the luggage, and bring it in cabs (which they called "hacks"), up to Mrs. Ess Kay's house in New York, where I knew she meant to stop for a few days before going on to Newport.

The minute we drove away from the Docks I began to notice dozens of things which made me tremendously conscious that I was in a foreign country. One would think, as so many of these people were English, or anyway, British, before they were Americans, that their build-ings and everything else would be enough like to remind one of home. But each street we turned into showed me that this isn't at all true in New York. There are bits like Paris—at least you think so, on a superficial glance—but nothing in the faintest degree like London.

Something in the air too, made me feel excited, as it does in Paris. Sparks of electricity snapped in my veins, and I had a presentiment of interesting things that must surely happen.

I've always been very sensitive to smells, which can make me joyful or miserable, just as music does. Vic says I oughtn't to tell people this, as it signifies I'm still in close touch with brute creation. But I don't much mind if I am, for so many animals are nicer than we are; dogs and horses, for instance; and then one has to acknowledge, whether one likes or not, that a monkey is a kind of poor relation. Each place I've ever visited has its own smell for me, and even houses and people. I would know the smell of Battlemead towers, if I were taken there by wind-ing ways, with my eyes blindfolded. It's the smell of old

oak, and *potpourri*, and books and chintz, and autumn leaves and pine trees, mixed together. Mother smells like a tea rose, and Vic like a wax doll. London has a rich, heavy scent, which makes you feel as if you had a great deal of money and wanted to spend it, but not in a hurry. The smell of Paris makes you want to laugh, and clap your hands and go to the theatre. The smell of Rome makes you feel as if you wished to be very beautiful, and move to the slow accompaniment of a magnificent church organ, with the *Vox Humana* stop drawn out. But New York—the smell of New York! How shall I describe the sensation it gave me, as Mrs. Ess Kay's electric carriage smoothly spun me up town? The heavy feeling of homesickness which I had had on the ship for the last few days was gone; and instead I felt a wild sense of exhilaration, as if I'd come dashing home after a glorious run with the hounds, and plunged into a cold bath with two bottles of Eau de Cologne poured into the water.

It was amazingly hot, but the breeze gave a hint of the sea, and every shop and house we passed seemed to keep spices stored away, for the breeze to blow over.

Even the old-fashioned houses, no higher than those in London, were as different from ours as possible; and it was extraordinary to see people—nicely dressed women, and pretty girls—perched on the front steps under awnings, without so much as a pocket-handkerchief lawn between them and the street. Persons of that class at home would be far too shy to lounge about and be stared at, not only by the neighbours, but by twenty strangers a minute; yet here they sat on rugs, and read, or did embroidery, or swung back and forth in chairs that rocked like cradles, paying no more attention to the passers than if they had been flies.

By and by we came out of the quiet streets walled in

with monotonous rows of red brick or brown stone houses, into a scene of terror. It was a street, too; but what a street! I thought that I'd grown accustomed to motor-ing through traffic, for once Stan took me in his Panhard, all the way from Battlemead to Pall Mall, where he stood me a very jolly luncheon at the Carlton Hotel, but that experience was nothing to this. I felt a little jumpy with Stan when we shot between omnibuses in a space which looked twice too narrow, and once when I thought a fright-fully tall horse was going to bite off my hat; but I soon got used to it.

If I were driven every day of my life for a year, through this terrible street in New York, though, I should be no more used to it on the last day than on the first. The only change in me at the end of that time would be in my hair, which would have turned snow white, and be stand-ing up permanently all over my head like Strümpel-Peter's, only worse.

London roars—a monotonous, cannon-balls-in-the-cellar roar, with just a light tinkle of hansom cabs sprinkled over the top of the solid sound; but that great straight street into which we suddenly flashed had no solid sound. It shrieked in short, sharp yells, made up of a dozen dis-tinct noises, each one louder and more insistent than the other.

There were trams and tram bells, and motors and car-riages, and over all an appalling thunder of trains rush-ing to and fro above our heads, on lines roofing the entire street, built upon iron stilts. Every minute they swooped by, running north and south, and I trembled lest they should leap their tracks and crush us into powder.

"It's only the Elevated, dear," said Sally, pitying my agitation, "and it's never fallen down yet, so I don't be-lieve it will to-day. You shall take a ride with me if

68 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

Cousin Katherine will let you, which she probably won't. You can't think what fun it is shooting past the windows of the houses; just like glancing into an exciting story book you know you'll never have a chance to finish. You do get a peep into tragedies and comedies, sometimes."

"My goodness!" I exclaimed. "I'm thankful I don't have to live in one of those houses. It must be impossible ever to take a bath, or to get engaged, properly."

Fortunately for my peace of mind, we didn't stop very long in that fierce street, but cut across again, and came out in Fifth Avenue, of which one seems to be born knowing a little more than of other streets in America. Just as almost everyone in English novels lives in Park Lane, so all the New Yorkers you read of live in Fifth Avenue; and I should have been disappointed if Mrs. Ess Kay hadn't, because in that case I should eventually have to go home without studying home life in the States from the right standpoint.

At first, I didn't see where the grand houses I'd heard of, kept themselves, for everywhere were smart shops, and public buildings, and—so close now that we could put down our sunshades—mountainous "sky-scrapers." The shops were beautiful, though Mrs. Ess Kay apologised for them by saying that it was out of season, and I'd never seen so much brilliance of colour or variety in a street. I tried to search for the cause of this effect, but I couldn't define it. Perhaps it was partly the clearness of the atmosphere, but there was a great deal more than that. Everything you passed seemed to be pink, or pale green or gold, or ivory white, or ultramarine blue; yet when you really thought it out detail by detail, it wasn't. And though I'd considered the sky-scrapers awful, from a distance, spinning along at their feet I couldn't deny them a fantastic kind of attractiveness.

At our rate of speed, I hadn't to wait many minutes for the grand Fifth Avenue houses; and oh, poor London—poor, dear London! I wanted to fly back and tear down Buckingham Palace.

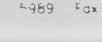
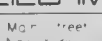
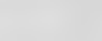
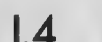
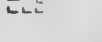
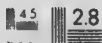
Mrs. Ess Kay had always talked about her "New York home," which made it sound rather small and modest, so I was surprised when we stopped before a huge, square pile, built of rich-looking, rough brown stones, so nearly the colour of a Christmas plum pudding that it made me hungrier than ever to look at it. The house is trimmed with three wide bands of carving, made of the same kind of stone; and there are carved bronze railings and lamps on the porch; and the front door is carved, too, like the door of a cathedral.

We were let into a vestibule, all coloured mosaic and things; and that opened into a big, square, glassed-over garden, with a great marble fountain playing in the middle. I never saw such a wonderful place in my life, but until I got used to it, I couldn't help feeling that it was more like a splendid foreign hotel, than a mere house. The garden isn't a real garden, when you come to examine it, for it's paved with rare stones of different colours, like the jewels in Aladdin's Cave; but all round the fountain beautiful flowers are growing, and pink and white water lilies float in the marble basin. There are orange trees in pots, and a forest of tall palms, all of which are reflected and repeated over and over again in the mirrors of which the walls are made; and on the little tables standing about here and there among groups of inlaid chairs are bowls overflowing with roses. The roof is a skylight, over which creepers have been trained, so that the light which filters through is a lovely green. No doors are visible at first glance, but when you are initiated, all you have to do is to walk up to the mirror-wall, find a gold button, press it,



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc

2455 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609, USA
716 486 0300 Phone
716 288 4969 Fax

and a door opens into a room as marvellous as the fountain court, round which, it seems, all the rest of the house is built.

"We'll have something to drink here," said Mrs. Ess Kay, "before we take off our things." So we all sat down, among the palms and orange blossoms, and a delicious sense of peace after storm stole over us with the coolness and the green dusk, and the perfume of flowers.

I supposed that "something to drink" at this time of day meant tea; but almost immediately a footman came through the glass wall, carrying a tray with nothing on it except tall tumblers. There were straws sticking out of the tumblers, and as the man moved, I could hear a faint tinkle of ice.

For a minute, I was bitterly disappointed, because the thought of tea had supported me for hours. But when I tasted the stuff in my glass I wasn't disappointed any longer. It had two or three strawberries, some bits of pineapple, and a white grape bobbing about on top, and it was full of chopped ice. I don't know what it was, for nobody mentioned it's name, and I was ashamed to ask, lest it might seem too ignorant; but it was good, and tasted as if it might have a little wine in it, mixed with fizzy water and other things. When I had drunk mine, I felt a different girl; quite merry, and so friendly towards Mrs. Ess Kay. I had never thought her such a nice woman. I laughed at almost everything that she and Sally said, and I said some rather funny things myself. Still, I'm not sure that as a regular thing, I wouldn't rather have tea.

We sat resting for some time, though I wasn't tired at all now. I could have run a mile, but suddenly I felt a little sleepy, and I was glad when Mrs. Ess Kay proposed to go to our rooms. Leaving the fountain court, we came

into a hall, hung with tapestry; and from it a wide stairway led us up to a gallery, lighted from the top, which runs all round the house, with the doors of the bedrooms opening off from it.

Mine is so gorgeous that I haven't known one thoroughly comfy moment in it, since I came, except at night when I'm asleep.

One would think, as Battlemead is ranked among the finest old Tudor places in England, and people come on Thursdays and give shillings to see it (a very good thing for us, though it's extremely inconvenient, as it pays for all the gardens and all the servants' wages) that it would be grander than quite a new house, in a country like America. But Battlemead, in its palmiest days, must have been *shabby* beside Mrs. Ess Kay's "home" in New York.

Our grandest bedroom,—the one where Queen Elizabeth slept—is quite a dull old hole compared to Mrs. Ess Kay's splendid room. Mine, at home, has all the furniture covered with faded chintz, and the curtains are made of plain white dimity. But I love the deep window seats where I can curl up among cushions, with a cataract of roses veiling the picture of the terrace with its ivy-covered stone balustrade, the sun-dial, the two white peacocks, and far away, the park with a blue mist among the trees. And I haven't learned yet to love my beautiful room at Mrs. Ess Kay's, though I admire it immensely—admire to the verge of awe.

It's pink and white and silver. The carpet is pink, and feels like moss, as you step. The wall is covered with pink and silver brocade, except where there are panels with Watteau-like pictures. The curtains are foamy lace, with the pink and silver brocade falling over them. The furniture looks as if it were made of ivory; there's a mirror

72 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

in three parts, reaching from the floor half way to the ceiling, so that you see yourself in front, and two profiles, like astral bodies, things which I've always wanted to cultivate, as they would be so nice for trying on dresses, or making calls on dull people. On the dressing-table is another mirror, an oval one, framed with pink roses, each of which has an electric light hidden in its heart; and the bedspread is of pink and silver brocade to match the hangings, with a large, hard roll like an ossified bolster, at the top.

I believe it's that bed more than anything else, which makes me feel that it's always Sunday in my room at Mrs. Ess Kay's. I'm used to old-fashioned, ruffy pillows and a plain white coverlet smelling of lavender, on which I can flop down whenever I like, to read a novel or to have a nice little "weep." But there's no flopping on this gorgeous pink and silver expanse, and it's small consolation to know that no queen of England ever had one as handsome.

Mrs. Ess Kay and Sally escorted me to my room, when I came to it first. After I'd admired everything enough to satisfy them, I was taken to see the bathroom adjoining, and then a kind of wardrobe room opening out of that. I was almost prostrated by the magnificence of both, which pleased Mrs. Ess Kay very much; and in the grand wardrobe room, smelling deliciously, though faintly, of cedar, my poor boxes—already arrived—looked mean and insignificant. Mrs. Ess Kay's and Sally's huge "Innovations" would have been much more appropriate than my dress-baskets, which had been squashed into lop-sided deformity under heavier things, in the hold.

Louise was on the scene armed with my keys and Mrs. Ess Kay wouldn't hear of letting me do anything myself. "Now, I'll explain why I had to desert you on the dock," she said. "Or perhaps I needn't explain. If you watch

Louise unpacking for a few minutes, you'll see for yourself. And I do hope, sweet child, that you'll excuse my taking a liberty."

This made me curious. Louise opened one of my boxes which had been labelled "Not Wanted," and I could hardly believe my eyes when she lifted out an exquisite poppy-coloured chiffon, embroidered with sprays of golden holly and berries made of some gleaming red jewel.

"Why, there's been some extraordinary mistake!" I exclaimed. "That can't be my box. I've no such dress."

"I know, love, but I *have*," said Mrs. Ess Kay, "and thanks to you, I've got it, and several others, through without paying duty. I thought you wouldn't mind, you're such a dear pet, and it's been *such* an accommodation. Not that I care about the money, but I do love to get the best of those Fiends at the Custom House, and I *have*, for once. You see, it was like this. When Louise went to the baggage room to get out some things for you, I had them put in my trunks, afterwards, and some of my dresses changed into yours, as your frocks had all been worn and mine hadn't. I told Louise to put my things down at the bottom, some in each of your trunks, and I was pretty sure the man wouldn't touch them, as you're a British subject. I trusted to luck that you'd be too 'cute to say anything and give me away, if you saw the dresses while your trunks were being examined, but I just *hoped* he wouldn't dig down to them. I dared not tell you what was going on, as Sally said I ought to, because if I had you might have refused, or else spoiled everything by being self-conscious. If you'd been with me, the Fiends might have caught on to our little game, they're so suspicious; but where you were, they never suspected any connection between us. You're just a *Dear*."

I had been a Dear in spite of myself, but there was no

74 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

use in making a fuss now the Dearness was all over, whatever I might have done if I'd known beforehand that I was to be a cat's-paw. Perhaps, if I hadn't been given the iced stuff with the strawberries, I might have been crosser; but fortified by that, I lived up to my reputation as a Dear, during the half hour of the unpacking.

When my frocks all hung in a row like Bluebeard's wives, in the cedar wardrobe, and I was left alone with them at last, my first thought was to plunge my imprisoned roses in water; my second, to do the same with myself.

The hope of tea (which hadn't been fulfilled) and a bath had kept me alive through those two hot hours on the dock; and now I could choose between several kinds of bath, each one more luxurious than any I had ever known. At home there's either the big bath, in the bathroom, or there's a tub in your bedroom, so it doesn't take you long to make up your mind which you will have. But here there were so many things I could do, that I grew quite confused among them.

There was the big bath, so big that two of our big ones at Battlemead could have gone into it; and instead of climbing ignominiously in, in the ordinary way, you walked down several glittering white marble steps. It was very alluring, but as the marble tank was so vast, I feared I might have to spend all the rest of the afternoon in getting it full of water. It seemed impertinent to make a convenience of such a splendid, early Roman sort of receptacle for a mere five minutes' splash; a bath of such magnificence ought, I felt, to be what Americans call a "function"; a ceremony for which you would prepare with perfumed ointments and ambergris, and protract for half a day, at least, not to be wasteful. Then there was the vapour bath, which you took in a kind of box, with a hole for your head to stick out; a porcelain sitz bath; and

a mysterious shower bath into which you secretively retired behind canvas curtains, shaped like a sentry box.

I dared not try the vapour, for fear I should be steamed, like a potato; the sitz seemed as inadequate as a thwarted ambition; and to turn on the shower without knowing how much it could do, or how soon it could be stopped, appeared a desperate adventure. After all, I thought, it was less worrying with us. Here, whichever thing you chose, you would probably wish you had had the other, whereas at home you did what you could, and were perfectly satisfied.

I decided that I would toss up a coin; heads, the big marble tank; tails, the shower. It came tails, and I had a dreadful qualm, but *noblesse oblige*; one must be sporting. So I was; only the hot water wouldn't come, and apparently there was ice in the cold, which wouldn't stop coming, and it was very violent. I screamed once, and Mrs. Ess Kay and Sally and Louise ran to the door, which was embarrassing; but fortunately, I'd locked it, and they told me how to stop the iced water. When it was all over, I felt like a marble statue for hours.

Dinner was at half past seven, which seemed odd in such a grand palace of a house, because, of course, at home, for some extraordinary reason unless you are in the middle classes, you never have an appetite before eight, at the very earliest. If you're in France, or other countries on the Continent, you can be hungry sooner, and evidently it is the same in America. Perhaps, if I were scientific, I should be able to classify these differences as natural phenomena.

I had dressed myself early, and was ready a little after seven, because I thought it would be nice to sit in the fountain court; but just as I was going down Louise knocked at the door.

"I have come to help Miladi, and to bring her these flowers," said she. "They are with *mille compliments* from Monsieur the Lieutenant Parker, the brother of Madame."

"But I have never met him," I said, gazing with wonder upon a group (bunch is too mean a word) of mammoth pink roses, with thickly leaved stems, longer than walking sticks. There were at least a dozen of these splendid creatures, loosely held together by trails of pink satin ribbon, wide enough for a sash. I had never dreamed of such roses. I almost expected them to speak.

"Miladi and the Lieutenant will meet at dinner," explained Louise. "It is an American custom that the Messieurs send always flowers to the ladies. Madame, and Mademoiselle Woodburn have received bouquets also, but these roses for Miladi are the most beautiful. Is it Miladi's wish that I untie the ribbon, and take out one or two for her to carry?"

I was on the point of saying "yes," because the flowers were so lovely, and because it would please Mrs. Ess Kay; but on second thoughts, I said "no," thanking Louise, and asking her to put the creatures' feet in water. Perhaps it would be as well, I reminded myself, to see this brother of Mrs. Ess Kay's (of whose existence I'd never heard) before I went about armed with his roses. I had already tucked the white bud, which had come to me on the dock like a dove with an olive branch, into the low neck of my frilly white muslin frock, and I gave it no rivals.

"Has Madame gone down?" I asked; for it occurred to me that it would be awkward to find myself alone for nearly half an hour with a strange man.

"I think Madame will be in the hall," said Louise, and satisfied, I descended in a stately way suited to the house, into the fountain court. Nobody was there, however, ex-

cept a young man in evening dress, who jumped up from a chair, and set down a small glass out of which he had been drinking.

"Allow me to introduce myself," said he. "I know you must be Lady Betty Bulkeley. My name is Potter Parker."

I couldn't help wondering whether his friends called him "Pot," for short, and the thought made me smile more than I would have smiled at a stranger if it hadn't popped into my head. This seemed to encourage him, which I regretted; because you can see at once by his face that he isn't the kind who needs encouragement. It is something like Mrs. Ess Kay's face, only younger, with her square chin, and bold blue eyes as pale as hers. The likeness is all the stronger because Mr. Parker wears no moustache or beard and his dark hair, which falls in two straight, thick locks over his forehead, is parted in the middle. You could know, if you saw him riding a white bear at the North Pole, that he was an American young man. Why, or how, I'm not experienced enough in Americans to tell, but I'm beginning to think that all American men, and all American women, have a dim sort of family likeness to each other. With the girls, it's their chins and the way they do their hair; but with the men it's more mysterious. They look less lazy and more feverish than our men, yet at the same time more humorous; and their clothes seem always to be new.

Mrs. Ess Kay's nose turns down, and her brother's turns up, which is the principal difference in their features, and his makes him look very impudent, though rather clever and amusing.

"My sister wrote me about your dimples, Lady Betty," said he, when I smiled; and I screwed my mouth into prunes and prisms as quickly as I could.

"I should have thought such things were hardly worth writing about," said I.

"My impression is that they're worth about a million dollars an eighth of an inch," he replied, "and I bet they'd fetch that in a bear market."

I began to wish that Mrs. Ess Kay or Sally would come, for I'm not used to having persons who have just introduced themselves make remarks on my dimples or other features.

"Don't be mad with me," he went on, "or I shall think I've estimated them too low. On mature consideration, as we soldier chaps say at a court-martial, I should be inclined to set them higher. If you'll just show them again——"

"I think, if you don't mind," said I, "that I'd rather speak of the weather."

"I'm afraid you're not used to Americans," said he.

"I've met several, crossing, but none of them talked to me about—such things," I replied, rather primly.

"If they had, I should have challenged them," he retorted. "While you're staying with my sister, I consider myself a sort of guardian of yours, and part of my duty will be to keep off men—other men—with a stick, you see."

"No, I don't see," said I. "Not that there will be the least necessity for you to do anything of the sort."

"Oh, won't there? Well, you just wait till you get to Newport, and you'll find out differently. I've applied for leave on purpose to help Kath protect you, and I expect to put on a suit of chain armour under my clothes. But first, you're coming to visit me, at West Point."

"I don't think I am," I said.

"Oh, but you are. It's a promise of Kath's. And shan't I be proud to show you around? You shall see

Flirtation Walk the first thing. It's what the ladies admire the most, at the Point. Perhaps you've heard of it?"

"No," said I. "And I never heard of West Point. Is it a suburb of New York?"

"Not much. It's our American Sandhurst. But you English people don't know anything about this side. I guess, now, you think that Florida is in South America?"

"I haven't thought about it yet," I replied.

"That's right. I don't ask anything better than to teach you the geography of the United States. We'll begin with Flirtation Walk. But see here, Lady Betty, that rose you've got on isn't a good sample of what we can grow over here. Didn't that maid of my sister's take you something a little better from me?"

"Something much bigger and grander," I said, feeling loyal to my poor white bud. "I was meaning to thank you."

"Don't do that; the things aren't worth it. I only wanted to know whether that French female had played me false or not. But here comes my sister. I wish she'd taken longer to do up her back hair. Now, I'll give you your wish, and talk about the weather. Mighty hot day, isn't it? Won't you have a cocktail? I'd just finished mine when you came down."

"Of course Betty will have a cocktail; we all do before dinner," said Mrs. Ess Kay, sailing towards us in a trailing white film of lace.

But Betty didn't have one, though at this moment several little glasses appeared on a tray. I was sure that Mother would not approve of cocktails for me, as it sounds so fast for a young girl who isn't yet out. When I excused myself, Mrs. Ess Kay laughed, and said, "Then what about that sherry cobbler?"

While I was trying to think what she meant, Sally came

80 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

into the hall, and immediately after I was surprised by a kind of musical moaning which began suddenly and kept on for a long time.

"That's the Japanese gong," said Mrs. Ess Kay, when I looked round to see where the sound came from. "It's for dinner. Potter, give Betty your arm."

I was glad she didn't use that nickname I'd been thinking of, for if she had, I should certainly have laughed.

We began dinner by eating pinky-yellow melons cut in half and filled with chopped ice. I thought at first that it must be a mistake, and they ought to have come in at dessert, but everybody else ate theirs without appearing disconcerted, so I did mine, and it was good. So were all the other things that followed in a long procession, though they were very strange and some of them I shouldn't have known how to eat if Mr. Parker, whose place was next to mine, hadn't told me.

We had bouillon partly frozen, instead of soup; and then came the most extraordinary little fried animals which quite startled me, they were so like exaggerated brown spiders, done in egg and breadcrumbs. "Soft shell crabs, dear child," said Mrs. Ess Kay, "and you eat every bit, down to the tippiest end of his claw."

I should never have managed the green corn, which grows like lots of pearls set close together in rows on a fat stick, if Mr. Parker hadn't scraped all the pearls off for me, with a fork, and put butter and salt on them. I liked him a little better after that, for he did the thing with great skill. When I had got so far, nothing could surprise me, and I didn't turn a hair when I found that I was expected to eat pears cut up with salad oil. But they were alligator pears, and when you tasted them, it appeared that they had nothing whatever to do with the fruit kingdom. Best of all, I liked the watermelon which

came at the end, cut in little balls, looking like strawberry water ice, and soaked in champagne. I hope that all the things to eat in America won't be so nice, or I may grow stout before I go back; and Vic says it is better for a girl to hang herself.

It was very trying, too, to find that I was keeping every course waiting. I've never been accused of greediness at home, though I've often been made to feel guilty of most other sins in the calendar, but I did feel queer when I began to realise that everybody else had finished what was on their plates, when I'd just about discovered what the thing was. It made me so uncomfortable to see them all leaning back waiting for me, after their plates had been whisked away, that I took to bolting the rest of my food, and by the time we'd got rid of nine courses in about half an hour I felt qualified to write the autobiography of an anaconda.

As for the iced water, I had intended to refuse it at any cost, because Vic and Mother both solemnly warned me that it made *all* the difference between a complexion and mere skin. But the minute I landed, I began thinking hard about iced water, and I soon discovered that when you are in America a comparatively small consideration like a complexion would never keep you from drinking it. In fact, nothing would. You feel as if you must drink iced water, pints of iced water, in rapid succession, if not only your complexion, but your whole face were to be sweet away in the deluge. Once you have got the taste nothing can quench it but iced water, more iced water, and still more iced water!

After dinner, while we were having heavenly Turkish coffee in the fountain court, who should come but Mr. Doremus. It seemed to me a funny time to call, but apparently the others didn't think it out of the way. He

wanted us to go to some theatre on a roof, and I should have loved it, especially when Mrs. Ess Kay said you didn't get smudges on your nose as you would if you sat on a roof in London—a thing which I never heard of anybody except cats doing. But she was tired, and I suppose it would have been ladylike for me to be, only I was much too excited. So Mr. Doremus stayed, and he and Mr. Parker talked more slang in an hour than I think I ever heard in my whole life, though I have always considered Stan talented in that way.

But Stan's slang, and Vic's, are quite different from American slang. In America, you build up your whole conversation out of it, and it's wonderful. I longed for a notebook while those two men were talking, to put everything down, and I felt, if people were often going to be as funny as that, I should need to go home soon to rest my features. I'm not sure whether Americans really think funnier things than English people do, but their funny ideas are startlingly unlike ours. Somehow they seem younger and more bubbling. When I go home, I shall probably have collected so much slang in my pores that I shall talk about putting on my "glad rags" when I'm going to dress for dinner; my life will be my "natural"; I shall call Stan's motor car the Blue Assassin or the Homicide Wagon; I shall say my best frocks are "mighty conducive"; I shall get bored by poor Mr. Duckworth, our newest curate, and tell him he's "the limit"; I may even take to abbreviating my affirmatives and negatives by saying "Yep" and "Nope" when I'm in a hurry; but if I do fall into these ways, I tremble to think what may be the effect on Mother.

IV

ABOUT SHOPPING AND MEN

WHY, Betty, you never told me you were interviewed on the dock." These were the first words Mrs. Ess Kay said to me as I walked in to breakfast, a little late because of a wrestle I had had with a different and even more exciting kind of bath.

"I wasn't," said I, on the defensive; though I couldn't be perfectly sure what connection, if any, interviewing had with the Customs. "You told me not to declare anything, and I didn't."

Mr. Parker, looking as if he had been melted, poured into his clothes, and then cooled off with iced water, burst out laughing.

"You're a daisy, Lady Betty," said he.

"Is it invidious to be a daisy?" I asked.

"I guess I must look in the dictionary for 'invidious'; but a daisy's a flower that has budded in the green fields of England, where there aren't any newspaper reporters or other strange bugs."

"Potter!" exclaimed Mrs. Ess Kay, "don't tease her; and when you've been in the green fields of England you'll say *insects*, not—er—what you *did* say, if you don't want ladies to faint all around you on the floor." Then she turned to me. "He means you're very innocent, because you don't know what it is to be interviewed. But you must have *been* it, all the same, for see here, in this dreadful *Flashlight*." And she handed me a newspaper, with

84 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

one page folded over, and huge headings dotted about at the tops of paragraphs, like the lines of big print that oculists keep to make you try your eyesight. In the middle column I saw my name, but I couldn't believe it was really there, in an American paper. I began to think I wasn't awake yet, and that this must be part of the dream I was dreaming all yesterday.

"BONNY—BETTY—BULKELEY," I read out aloud. "A Duke's Daughter on the Dock. Call Her by Her Front Name, Please. What Lady Betty Thinks of Our Boys."

There was more, but when I had got so far, I simply gasped.

"How *dare* they?"

"There isn't much they don't dare, except to go back without a 'story'," said Mr. Parker, laughing. But I didn't laugh. I was too angry.

"If my brother were here, he'd kill them," I said.

"Then he hasn't got a sense of humour," replied Mr. Parker; "I don't see how a Duke could have, and *be* a Duke nowadays; but I guess I wouldn't mind swopping my sense of humour for a dukedom, all the same. See here, Lady Betty, you'll get to like our newspapers before you've been over here a month. They sort of grow on you. They're as interesting as novels, and almost as true to life."

"This isn't true to my life, anyway," I said, not knowing whether I wanted most to laugh or cry. "Oh, Sally, Sally Woodburn, will anybody believe I said such things as these?"

"Give the *Flashlight* to me and let me look," she said. And when she'd taken the paper, she began to read the stuff that came under the big headings, out aloud, in her pretty, soft voice.

"Yesterday was a blazer, but though it was hot enough on the docks to roast a coon, when the Big Willie steamed in, that beautiful young visitor to our shores, Lady Betty Bulkeley, managed to look like the Duke's daughter and Duke's sister she is, and so far as a mere man could tell, without the help of patent hair curlers, or other artificial aids to personal pulchritude.

"A daughter of the gods, divinely tall and most divinely fair, she sat on a throne of ducal luggage, looking queenly in an elegant white shirt waist, built mostly of holes and eminently suited to her style of beauty as well as the weather. She also had on a picture hat, which was superfluous as she would have been a picture without it, and below the waist she was tailor made."

"I think it's most insulting!" I broke in. "And I was made at home, all the way down."

But Sally went on: "I soon found [writes the representative of *The Flashlight*] that the sister of the Duke of Stanforth, one of Britain's eligibles, preferred to be addressed by her Front name of Lady Betty. 'I feel more at home,' said she, with a sweet voice, but a pronounced English accent, 'when I am called Lady Betty. And I want to feel at home in America, because I expect to be some time with my friend, Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox, who will show me society over on this side. I have heard so much about Newport, don't you know? I fancy it will be too utterly deevy.'"

"What's deevy?" I demanded with scorn.

"Oh, that's supposed to be what smart Englishwomen say for divine."

"I never heard it," I sneered, "much less said it. I'm sure Mother would consider it quite profane."

"Well, do be quiet, child, and listen to what *The Flashlight* says you said." "What opinion have you

86 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

formed of our society women and clubmen, on board the Willie?' was the next question.

" 'I think your ladies are better dressed than ours, and the gentlemen are just lovely. They don't sit around and wait while we girls amuse them, they hustle to give us a good time, and they know how to do it. I shouldn't wonder if I should hate to go home and associate with lords after being a summer girl in Newport. I don't see now why American girls go out of their own country to marry.' "

" 'I suppose we shall be seeing your brother, the Duke, over here before long?' "

" 'His Grace may come to fetch me back,' replied her ladyship. 'He has never been to America, but it is one of the desires of his life to come, and your American beauties had better look out, for he is a gay young bachelor, and I shouldn't be surprised if he took a fancy to carry home a Duchess. Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox will entertain him also, and maybe he will paint some of America red.' "

" 'That's all about you, I see,' Sally finished up. "The rest is about Cousin Katherine and me. It says we've come back with a touch of the Piccadilly accent; and it criticises my nose, and the way Cousin Katherine puts on her hat. It describes this house all wrong, and says the Newport cottage 'knocks spots' out of Mrs. Van der Windt's cottage. It also mentions Cousin Potter, and calls him 'one of our Army Dudes.' But we don't mind, and you mustn't. Everybody reads *The Flashlight*, for the sake of the shocks, but nobody believes its flashes.' "

" 'Still, you must have said something to the man,' remarked Mrs. Ess Kay.

" 'I only said 'No, but—' or 'Yes, but—,' " I insisted. "Truly and truly nothing else. And oh, there was a *Bat*, too, who tried to talk to me.' "

"Great Scott! the *Evening Bat*," chortled Mr. Parker. "Look out for something rich to-night."

"Can't he be stopped?" I asked.

"Might as well try to stop Niagara—with a tin can; the less *you* said, the more the *Bat* will say. But it doesn't matter. Nobody'll care. Reporters are paid by the yard for imagination; information's gone out, though I do hear you use it still on your side."

I was just going to defend information (British) at the expense of imagination (American), when I remembered that the "Army Dude"—which sounds rather like something you might buy at the Stores—had sent me up an enormous bouquet of violets as big as a breakfast plate, and that I'd forgotten to thank him. I did so at once, but it seemed that I had blundered.

"Violets?" he echoed. "Must have been some other fellow. I sent you gardenias."

"Oh, then the cards got mixed," I said. "I thought the gardenias were from Mr. Doremus. How kind of you both. I was so surprised to receive such lovely flowers."

"Our American buds are surprised when they don't get them. They would think it a cold day when they didn't have a slight morning haul of flowers—must be out of season ones, or they're no use—new novels, or candy. What do men over on your side of the water do to convince you girls that they think you're as beautiful as you really are?"

I thought for a minute, and then I said that perhaps we weren't as hard to convince as American girls. I don't know whether this was a proper answer or not, but, anyway, Mr. Parker laughed, and then began to plan what we should do for the day.

"Say, let's run her over to Coney Island," he said.

"Oh, my dear boy!" exclaimed Mrs. Ess Kay. "Not for anything. The Duchess would have a fit—I mean, she would be horrified."

But when I heard that Coney Island was like a kind of glorified Margate (which I've never been to, but only heard about) with switchbacks and all sorts of shows, I said that Mother would consider it a chapter in the liberal education of a respectable British tourist; and it was decided that we should dine there. Mrs. Ess Kay had to do a lot of things before she could go on to Newport, so we were to shop all the morning, lunch at Sherry's, rest in the afternoon, and spend the evening at Coney Island. Next day we were to go to West Point, where Mr. Parker is stationed and stay there all night for a cadet ball.

Just as we had got this programme settled, and were making up our minds to go out early, "while it was cool" (we should all have been lying about with wet handkerchiefs on our foreheads at home, and there would have been special prayers in church, if it had ever been what New Yorkers seem to think cool) the butler came in leading by a leash a perfect angel of a dog, a little French bull, with skin satiny as a ripe chestnut, and eyes like rosettes of brown velvet, with diamonds shining through them. He had on a spikey silver collar, fringed on each edge with white horsehair, and he came trotting into the room with a high action of his paws, dainty and proud, like a horse that knows he's on show; and his tiny head was cocked on one side as if he were asking us to please admire him and be his friends.

I supposed that the little fellow belonged to Mrs. Ess Kay, and that he was being brought in to bid his mistress good morning, but she said quite sharply, "What dog is that?"

"He's a parcel, ma'am," said the butler, "addressed

to Lady Betty Bulkeley. He was left at the door by a messenger boy, and the label's on his collar."

In another instant that little live, warm bundle of brindled satin sewed on to steel wires was in my lap, and it did seem as if he knew that he was mine. The queerest thing was that he had no note with him. On the label—just a luggage label tied on his collar—was my name, in a strange, but very interesting looking hand, and these words besides: "The Dog is now found. His name is Vivace."

"Who *has* sent it to you, Betty?" asked Mrs. Ess Kay; and I could see by her eyes that she was very curious.

I had just answered, "I don't know from Adam," when some words of my own jumped into my head. I could hear myself saying, "I must first find the dog," and then I knew that the giver of Vivace wasn't Adam. But luckily I hadn't thought before I spoke, so it was no harm to let it rest at that: and I just sat and played with my new toy while Mrs. Ess Kay and her brother jabbered about him excitedly.

"It must be Tom Doremus," said she. "He's the only man I let you know well enough on board to take such a liberty."

I thought of another man she hadn't wanted to let me know; but I rubbed my chin on Vivace's ear, which felt like a wall-flower, and kept quiet.

"Check of Doremus," remarked Mr. Parker. "He's a Josher from wayback. How does he know Lady Betty likes dogs? I should send the little brute off to the Dogs' Home."

"If Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox makes me do that, I shall have to go with him—and stop with him, too," said I. And I almost hated Mr. Parker for a minute in spite of

the walking-stick roses and the snowstorm of gardenias upstairs.

"Of course, you shall keep the dog, if you want to," said Mrs. Ess Kay, "unless we find out that he's been sent by someone undesirable, and then of course the Duchess would expect me to see that you gave him back."

"I *feel* somehow that we shall never find out," I said, and I hugged Vivace so hard, without meaning to, that he gave a tiny grunt. But he didn't mind a bit, and licked my hand with a tongue that was like a sweet little sample of pink plush.

I was suddenly so happy with my surprise-present that I forgave America for having imaginative reporters, and wasn't homesick for the pony or for Berengaria and her puppies, or anything.

Vivace went out with us in the electric carriage, and even Mrs. Ess Kay had to admire him as he sat straight up in my lap, like a bronze statue of a dog. "He's a thoroughbred, anyhow," she remarked. "He can't have cost a penny less than five hundred dollars, so whoever the anonymous giver is, he must be a rich man."

I'm rather hazy about dollars, still, but when I heard that, I felt myself go red. I knew well enough that the giver—who wasn't Adam—was very far from being a rich man, and I couldn't bear to think that he had perhaps squandered some hard-earned savings on buying such an extravagant present for me. But the more I thought of it—which I did all the way down to the shops—the more I thought it impossible that a man who had been obliged to cross the Atlantic in the steerage would even have a hundred pounds in the world. Somebody had perhaps given him the dog from a good kennel, when it was a wee puppy, I said to myself; but this, though it eased my mind in one way, made the gift seem all the more pathetic;—

that that poor, handsome Jim Brett should part with something he must have loved (for who could have Vivace and not love him?) to please me. I should have liked to write a note to the Manhattan Club, where he had told me he was employed, to thank him. But he had sent the present anonymously, and I felt somehow as if he hadn't meant or wished me to acknowledge it.

While I was wondering what I should do, the brougham stopped before a shop even larger than Harrod's or the Army and Navy Stores. There were lovely things in the windows, things that looked like American women, and not like English or even French ones, though I couldn't define the difference if I were ordered to with a revolver at my head.

The petticoats and stockings and belts and lace things and parasols, and especially blouses, were so perfectly thrilling that my heart began to beat quite fast at sight of them. I felt as if I must have some immediately; and when Mrs. Ess Kay said that this was "quite a cheap store," I said to myself that I would do something more interesting than watch her shopping.

She had to buy handkerchiefs to begin with, for most of hers had disappeared in the wash at foreign hotels; and Sally wanted veiling. Those were not interesting to me, because they are necessary; and necessities, like your daily bread and such things, are so dull. I said that I would just wander about a little, as they thought they would be some time, and we made an appointment to meet in half an hour at what they called the notion counter. I hadn't an idea what it was, and didn't like to ask, because I had asked so many questions already; but I knew that I could get someone to take me there when the half hour was up.

When you want everything you see, but aren't sure

which things you want enough to buy and how many you can afford, it's less confusing to prowls alone. Besides, there was an exciting feeling of independence in strolling about unchaperoned in a shop as big as a village, in a strange foreign city.

I really did need a sunshade to go with a blue dress of mine, because my only light one (if I don't count rather a common white thing) is pink. I saw some beauties, and I wanted to ask the price; but the attendants,—who were girls, with lovely figures and their hair done in exactly the same flop over their foreheads,—were so interested in talking about a young man they all knew, that it seemed cruel to interrupt them, especially as I mightn't buy the sunshade in the end. However, I did venture to speak, in quite a humble voice, by and by, but the girl couldn't understand a word until I'd repeated everything twice. "A sunshade? Oh, you mean one of these parasawls," she said then. "Excuse me, it's your English accent I didn't quite catch at first. That one's ten dollars and forty-nine cents, and this is eight dollars, eighty-nine."

While we were busy doing the dollars into pounds and shillings, we got quite friendly, for she was a very obliging girl, and didn't bear me any grudge for interrupting, though her friends were going on with their conversation and telling such exciting things about the young man that she must have been dying to listen.

However, my girl hardly paid any attention to them at all, except just to get mixed up in her answers to me once or twice. She said it was very difficult to understand English people on account of their not opening their mouths much when they spoke, and their accent being so strong. I found this odd, because we always feel as if, the English language having been started by us, it is Americans who have an accent; but it seems that a great many people in

the States dislike the way we talk, very much, and consider it extremely affected.

After all the trouble she had taken, I felt dreadfully not to buy anything of her, but the sunshades were too expensive, though she said they were marked down. I took a Japanese fan instead, which pops out at you like a Jack-in-the-box, from a fat red stick; and even that was a dollar and twenty-five cents when I thought it would be sixpence. On the way to meet Mrs. Ess Kay and Sally at the notion counter, I enquired the price of a good many other superlatively beautiful things, but they were all superlatively high, as well; and by the time a very dashing young man, who said he was a "floor-walker," had steered me to the notions, I felt as if I were the only cheap thing in the whole shop. To be sure, there were some embroidered collars and American flag-headed hat-pins, and flowered muslin wrappers which I could have had without ruining myself, if I had wanted them. But I did not, and what I should like to know is, what does a girl do if she's poor and has to live in New York? Mrs. Ess Kay had said the shop was a cheap shop, so there must be others where even the flowered wrappers and collars and hatpins are more. And besides, a girl couldn't go through life dressed entirely in such things. However, judging from the girls I have seen so far, they are all very rich, except the lower classes; and of course, it's much simpler to do without things if you can just be poor and give up to it comfortably, without thinking of appearances, like us.

As soon as I saw the Notion Counter, I knew why they had named it that; only it would be still more expressive if it were called the Imagination counter. It was lovely, and looked like thousands of little Christmas presents spread out for everyone.

There were a great many pretty people buying things

94 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

at it, and in most of the other departments where I went with Mrs. Ess Kay and Sally; but when I admired them, and the sweet blouses they wore, and the way they carried their shoulders and hips, Mrs. Ess Kay sniffed, and said there was nobody in New York, now,—nobody at all who was worth looking at, and wouldn't be till October, except those who were just in the city for a day or two of shopping, like us. When I suggested that these charming beings in white muslins and summer silks might be here in that way, she did not think it at all probable.

"How can you tell?" I asked. "They look just as nice as we do."

Indeed, I thought some of them looked nicer, but I've been much too well brought up to make such remarks as that.

"I can tell, because I don't know their Faces," said Mrs. Ess Kay, decidedly, in a tone that gave a capital letter to her last word, and yet intimated that the poor, unknown (by her) Things couldn't possibly be worth a glance.

Now, Mother and Aunt Sophy are rather like that. It's almost terrible when they say "Who *Is* she?" But I shouldn't have expected it to be the same in America, if Sally hadn't warned me. I suppose it's quite easy to remember just Four Hundred faces, as you're sure there will never be any more, even if they have children, because they're being cut down instead of going up in number.

When we had been for about an hour and a half in the big shop, we'd finished all we had to do there, and must motor to another farther up, before meeting Mr. Parker, who was to give us lunch at a place called Sherry's, at one o'clock. On the way, Sally suddenly exclaimed, "Oh, Cousin Katherine, we must initiate this dear child into the

mysteries of ice cream soda water; and I'm just yearning for some myself, anyhow."

"Huyler's," said Mrs. Ess Kay to her *mecanicien*, a very young man with eyes that looked positively ill with intelligence, and a way of snapping out "all right" when she spoke to him that would make Stan sit up with surprise if his chauffeur did it.

Sally said that the nicest oasis in the desert of London was an American place where you can get ice cream soda water; but I had never had any, and in the burning heat of the New York morning—which flung itself into the shop like a great wave in spite of fierce electric fans—I could have purred in pure delight over the piled up, ice-cold froth in that tall glass. It tasted like frozen velvet flavoured with strawberries, and I should have loved to be an ostrich or an anaconda so that the sensation might have lasted longer.

There were no men in the shop, only women, and so pretty that you wondered if there were a notice posted up over the door forbidding plain ladies to enter. Two or three had yellow hair, yellower than mine, and Mrs. Ess Kay said they were actresses who always came back to New York in summer to wait for Things to turn up, just as chickens come home to roost; and that they were supposed to be Resting.

I had always thought that a banana made you feel more as if you had eaten a large, elaborate dinner than any other one thing possibly could; but I found that an ice cream soda is even more so; and it was lucky for us that we had another hour's shopping to do (Mrs. Ess Kay made it an hour and a half because Potter is only her brother) before luncheon.

The next shop was even more wonderful than the first,

and would have been a great deal more solemn and dignified, and even conventional, if the same kind of wooden balls hadn't gone tearing round like mad squirrels in wire cages over the counters, with people's money shut up inside them. There were very young youths sitting in tall pulpit things, who caught the balls on the fly in a sporting way, and did something to them, but I never could see what, and afterwards sent them back, with the greenback bills inside turned miraculously into silver and pretty miniature pennies.

When we got to Sherry's Potter was waiting for us, and looking cross. I think persons with turned up noses show crossness more easily than the other kind, and Potter had the expression in his eyes that Vic has when her shoes are tight and Mother is in a trying mood at the same time. I shouldn't be surprised if he has a horrid temper, although he thinks of so many funny things. And though he is so nice to me, he can't help saying things sometimes which show that he has a prejudice against England. That seems extraordinary, and shows one how conceited we English really are; for one is quite accustomed to the idea that there may be people who don't care for Americans, but it *is* odd that Americans may not like us. I suppose it's on a par with the sentiments in our National Anthem, which when one comes to analyse them, don't exactly suggest a sense of give and take—or, for that matter, a sense of humour.

"Confound *their* politics, frustrate *their* knavish tricks," but naturally bless everything in which We are concerned, as We are certain to be above reproach. I'm afraid that's quite of a piece with the calm confidence we have in our own superiority, although I daresay I should never have realised it if it weren't for Mr. Potter Parker and his perky nose.

It began to be less perky when we were all settled at a table in a perfectly charming restaurant, the most restful place to eat in that I ever saw. I can't imagine even a fiend being ill-tempered in it for long; and it was deliciously cool, as if we had come into a shadowy green wood after the blazing, brassy glare of the streets.

The big room really was rather like a wood, so the simile isn't far-fetched;—an open space in a wood, ringed round with tall trees bending their branches low over a still pool. The soothing brown of the wainscoted walls gave the tree-trunk effect; the great hanging baskets of ferns and moss that swung from the ceiling were the tree-branches; and the many round, snow-white tables, with green velvet chairs grouped closely round them on the polished floor were the water-lilies with green pads floating on the surface of the pond.

Nearly everything we had for lunch was in a more or less advanced state of frozenness, from the bouillon, ever so far along to the ices in the shape of different-coloured fruits, toward the end. Nevertheless, all of us, except Potter, drank iced water instead of wine whenever we stopped eating for an instant, or couldn't think of anything particular to say; and the more we had the more we seemed to want. There was a kind of iced-water curse upon us.

It has never occurred to Vic or me to lie down in the afternoon, though she tries to sleep a little sometimes if she's going to a ball. But when we got home, Mrs. Ess Kay and Sally took it quite as a matter of course that we would lie down before going to Coney Island to dine and see fireworks and other things. They were surprised when I didn't want to, but Mrs. Ess Kay said in that case Potter would entertain me while they rested. I told her it wasn't necessary, but Potter wanted me to bet my sweet life that it was just the one Proposition on earth for him,

98 LADY BETTY 'ACROSS THE WATER

so he and Vivace and I sat in the fountain court while Mrs. Ess Kay and Sally went upstairs.

Potter was suddenly a changed man, as soon as he and I were alone together, becoming exactly what he had been yesterday when I first ran downstairs, and he introduced himself.

He didn't chaff me about my country, and make fun of our government, or hint that American men were the only men living who knew how to treat women, as he seemed to delight in doing when his sister and cousin were with us. He began by offering to teach me some of his best slang; but as the lesson went on, it turned out to be rather more like a lesson in flirtation.

I would have been even more startled than I was, if I hadn't already had a little experience on board ship, with Mr. Doremus. At home I've often thought it must be very pleasant to be out, and able to flirt; but I never had a chance, because, as Vic said, it was her turn first, and the only young man, not a relation, that I ever talked with alone was the curate, who would as soon have tried to flirt with a Bishopess as with one of Mother's daughters.

But I like Mr. Doremus' kind of flirtation almost better than Mr. Parker's. Mr. Doremus makes you feel as if you were a beautiful young heroine in a play, and you are almost sorry there is no audience to applaud the witty things he says, and the smart answers he inspires you to think of, just as if he were giving you a clue.

Potter is different, and instead of an audience you want a kind of perpetual chaperon, not a Briareus creature with lots of hands to applaud.

It is silly, I know, to blush and simper; but I couldn't think of anything else to do, Potter was so alarming; and I wouldn't allow him to tell my fortune by my hand, for it was much too hot. Even if it hadn't been I shouldn't

have wanted my hand held, for I do hate being touched by anyone I'm not fond of. When I told him that, he said it was very simple; what I had to do was to get fond of him, and then it would be all right.

"I shan't have time," I said. "There'll be too much for me to think about; and then I shall be going home."

"How long does it take an English girl to get fond of a man?" said he.

I told him I didn't know anything about that, as I wasn't out; but I supposed it depended on the kind of girl.

"I guess it depends more on the man, in your climate, doesn't it?" asked Potter. "But over here it's sometimes a question of hours, for both sides. Why, a chum of mine went out to San Francisco on business which was going to keep him just one day. He met a girl at dinner, fell in love with her while she was eating her soup, and told her so before dessert came along. She vacillated over the ice cream, but said yes with the peaches and pears. Next day they got married and he brought her back East for a wedding trip."

"What did they do about the Banns?"

"Oh, Americans have done away with Banns since the Revolution, I guess. When we fellows fall in love we're in a hurry."

"Marry in haste, repent at leisure," I quoted primly.

"We don't repent. We just get a divorce. It saves worry. Incompatibility of the affections, or fatty degeneration of the 'emper, or something like that. But I don't need to talk of such things to you. Nobody who got a prize-package like Lady Betty Bulkeley would part with it while he had a button left on his coat."

"I don't see what buttons would have to do with it,"

100 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

I said, but as I had always been sent out of the room at home directly anyone began even to mention divorce, I thought I had better go upstairs and dress for dinner at Coney Island. Mr. Parker begged me not, but I would; and Vivace barked as if he were under the impression that he was a watch dog; so thanks to him I got away without trouble.

V

ABOUT WEST POINT AND PROPOSALS

I COULD hardly have supposed that there were as many people in the whole world put together, as at Coney Island; and most of them were in pairs, like the animals on their way to the ark. They all seemed to be engaged to each other, and delighted with each other's society, or else married and dreadfully tired of it. Or else they had dyspepsia. Or else they had brought too many of their children; for they had droves of very small ones, who bellowed louder than any English children I ever saw, and tyrannised over their parents in the most unbridled way.

But Coney Island was fun, and I felt more than ever that I was dreaming; a long, long dream of sands, and huge hotels, and queer little booths.

For dinner we ate nothing but fish, of so many different kinds and some of them so strange, that I almost feared the dream might turn into a nightmare afterwards. I found the clams rather like olives; you hate the first, but when you have had three you feel you would like three dozen; and they are not at all easy to forget.

We went down Under the Sea, and were introduced to horrific monsters, sailed up and down on switchbacks, which made Mrs. Ess Kay ill, but she nobly refused to desert me in such surroundings—a state of mind which made her chin look incredibly square. Eventually, after many adventures by the way, we arrived at the Moon, and not only got into the middle of it, but made acquaintance

102 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

with the inhabitants, none of whom appeared to be over two feet high, or to have anything to speak of between their chins and their toes. After that experience, minstrel shows and concerts, and persons who told your fortunes with snakes, or ate glass, were rather an anticlimax; still, I enjoyed them all so much that I was incapable of extreme annoyance when we discovered that *The Evening Bat* had an "impressionist sketch" of me which made me look like an elderly murderess.

We got back to New York almost indecently late, but in the meaner parts through which we had to pass on the way to our gorgeousness the streets swarmed with poor creatures, pallid with heat, evidently preparing to camp out of doors till morning. It was a strange and interesting sight, but made me feel guilty when I recalled it afterwards in my great cool bedroom, with my five different kinds of baths.

Next morning I was waked early to find more presents of flowers in huge stacks, and to get ready for West Point. I was a little tired from yesterday, and the dry heat gave me rather the sensation of being a scientist's field mouse in a vacuum, so that I should have dreaded even a short journey if we hadn't been making it by water.

It was even better than if we had been ordinary tourists on one of the big Hudson River boats I had heard about, for we were to travel luxuriously in a little steam yacht of Potter's, which he calls "The Poached Egg" because it can't be beaten. It is not a vulgar yacht, as one might have thought from the name, but a dainty thing that ought to have been "The Butterfly," "Ye White Ladye," or something of that sort. When I said so, Mr. Parker insisted that he would at once re-christen her "Lady Betty," which would have a prettier meaning than anything else; and then I was sorry I'd spoken.

I had expected to be disappointed in the river, because nearly everybody I met on board ship tried to impress upon me that we had nothing half so good in England; while as for the Rhine, it wasn't a patch on the Hudson. I even wanted to be disappointed, out of patriotism or spite, which are much the same thing sometimes; but I couldn't. I found the Hudson too grand for petty jealousy. It seemed to me like a great, noble poem, rolling on and on in splendid cadences: and I have heard some music of Wagner's that it reminded me of, somehow.

The hills or mountains—I'm not sure which to call them—even the Palisades which have been so dinned into my ears—were not high enough to satisfy me at a first glance; but soon I saw that it was their grouping and their perfect proportion in relation to each other which made them so exquisite. As we steamed on, along the green and golden flood, between banks that appeared to fall back in admiration, I began to love the Hudson so much that I could have shrieked with rage at the great staring advertisements on hoardings. What can the scenery have done to Americans, that they should do their best to spoil it? No wonder: most of them come over to see ours, which we have the sense to let alone, even if it crumbles.

Sally and Mr. Parker laughed at my fury, but I didn't see how they could take it so calmly. "It isn't my scenery, so I don't trouble myself," said Potter, when I asked why he didn't get up a secret night expedition to burn or chop down all the hoardings. But I'm sure English people aren't careless like that. Each person thinks the good of the whole country is *his* business; at least one would suppose so by the way everybody who comes to Battlemead talks politics and affairs of public interest, morning, noon and night. It seems, though, in America only policemen and people who live in Washington care

104 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

about politics really, except to get benefits for themselves; and it isn't good form to be too much interested in such things.

Victoria would like this rule, for she has confessed to me that political questions bore her, and she would much rather be talked to about love or motoring, or even bridge; but she always reads the newspapers hard for fifteen minutes while Thompson does her hair, if she's going out to a big lunch or dinner, so that she will be up in everything and able to talk brilliantly to members of Parliament, or stuffy old things in the House of Lords.

I calmed down somewhat after I'd recovered from the first shock of seeing several islands entirely devoted to insisting that Unceda Biscuit, or a Cigar, or some other extraneous thing which you're sure you *don't* need in the least, and wouldn't buy even if you did when it had been forced on you like that. There was so much to admire that it seemed a shame to fret. Besides, it was soothing to sit on the yacht's deck under a pale green awning, drinking what I call a lemon squash, and Potter and Sally obstinately believe to be lemonade. While Mrs. Ess Kay angrily read nasty paragraphs about herself, and hilariously about her friends, in a regular highwayman of a paper, *Smart Sayings*, Sally Woodburn told me charming legends of the Hudson; dear old Dutch things, most of them, which had been made into plays and poems; and I was sorry when we came to West Point at last.

But I wasn't sorry for long. The minute we got on shore at a quaint little landing shoved incongruously in among beautiful wooded hills, the most exquisite scents of ferns and trees, and sweet, moist earth came hurrying down to welcome us. Eton is not more beautiful than West Point; and as we drove up the hill under an arbour of trees, I saw that the buildings cleverly contrived to look

old and grey and picturesque, like ours. The elms in a big green square past the top of the hill had a venerable air, too, so they must have been precocious about growing, for it doesn't stand to reason that West Point can be as ancient as Oxford or Eton. But anyway, the elms were there, making an effect that England couldn't improve on, and there were some grey stone barracks, and a long line of officers' quarters built of wood and brick. I was glad that we were to stop with Potter, instead of going to an hotel, for I did want to see thoroughly what garrison life is like. Potter has only half a house, though I suppose he's rich enough to buy up all West Point if it were for sale; but he had got a chum of his, who lives in the other half, to clear out of his part and give it to us for the day and night.

Vic has been to Aldershot, and even to Malta and Gib. But I never have, and I never saw any officers' quarters at home, so I don't know how they compare with American ones. Potter's and his friend's are exactly like a doll's house turned into a museum. The rooms are tiny, and most of the furniture is made to fold up; but Stan would be green with envy if he could see their Persian rugs, and their silver things, and their dozens of Meerschaums, and their curiosities from all over the world.

I asked Potter what he would do when he was ordered away.

"That depends on where I'm ordered," said he. "If I don't like the place, I'll resign, and be a mere cit. It would be easy to get back again into the Army if there were any fun going."

"What kind of fun?" I wanted to know.

"A war with somebody, of course," said he. Men have the most extraordinary ideas of fun. But they seem to be alike about that in England and America. They are

106 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

never so happy as when they are killing something or in danger of being killed themselves. I can't imagine how it would feel to be like that; but I know if they were different we should hate them. And Potter looked so nice in his soldier clothes (which he got into while we were making ourselves pretty for lunch) that I couldn't help thinking it would be a pity for him to leave the army.

His friend was invited to lunch with us, to make up for sacrificing his house. He is nicer than Potter, or even Mr. Doremus; but not half so handsome or brave looking, or with such a charming voice as poor Jim Brett—who is not, I suppose, a gentleman except by nature; otherwise he couldn't have been in the steerage.

I thought it was silly to have wire nettings in all the doors and windows, just to keep away a few innocent midges, until we sat out after lunch. There is a pleasant balcony with an upstairs and a downstairs, which Potter and Captain Collingwood call the "piazza," and it would have been delightful sitting there while the men smoked, if appalling little animals with a ridiculous number of thin, stick-out legs hadn't come buzzing round us. They were saucy-looking things, got up in loud suits of black and grey stripes, not in the least like our quiet, respectable midges at home; and they weren't even honourable enough to wait until sunset before attacking you. They pricked horribly, like pins your maid has stuck in the wrong places; and they had a horrid *penchant* for your ankles. I *was* sorry I had on clocked stockings! And I apologised heartily to Potter for poking fun at his wire nettings.

Though it was so hot, the air was delicious. It smelt of new-mown grass and lilies, with a sharp little spicy tang of the thick Virginia creepers, which made a shadowy green room of the "piazza." Birds were simply roaring

with joy in the trees that overhung the house, and Potter and I almost quarrelled because he would insist that some huge creatures hopping about on the grass were robins. They would have made three of ours, and were much more like quails that had spilt strawberry juice on their breasts.

By and by Captain Collingwood asked if "Lady Betty didn't want to go and see things."

"She's booked to me for Flirtation Walk," said Potter, before I could answer. "Three's a crowd there, old chap." On which I regret to state Captain Collingwood suggested that Potter should teach his own grandmother something about nourishing herself with an egg diet.

"Anyhow, I suppose you don't object to a rearguard for inspection of camp, and other features of public interest," he went on; and after some hesitation Potter decided that this would be admissible.

Mrs. Ess Kay and Sally both wanted to lie down (it's strange the fondness American women have for putting themselves in a horizontal position in the daytime!) so Mrs. Ess Kay said that she would commission her brother as chaperon; I needn't be anxious, she assured me, it was quite *comme il faut*. As if I would have worried about a thing like that!

I was delighted to go, because the most interesting groups had been passing the house, and it was difficult to see all you wanted to through the veil of creepers, without continually craning your neck. Tall, brown-faced boys, got up much like glorified Buttons, were sauntering about, holding sunshades over the heads of girls so young that they would have been in short frocks with their hair down their backs, in England. The girls were in white muslin or pale colours, with charming, floppy Leghorn hats trimmed with flowers; and they looked like the daintiest, prettiest of French dolls. But I was a great deal

108 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

more interested in the youths, who were the cadets—first classmen, Potter said, and would be second lieutenants next year.

I never could take much interest in Eton boys, the few I have seen, for they look such children that one would be positively ashamed to bother with them; but the West Point cadets (though one couldn't exactly take them seriously like regularly grown-up men, perhaps), fascinated me from the very first glance through Potter's Virginia creeper. They looked as if they thought a lot of themselves, and the girls they were with had the air of encouraging them to think it. I wondered what kind of things they said to girls and secretly longed to find out.

It seems that in summer the cadets leave their barracks and go into camp, which is a time of year that the girls who visit West Point and those whose fathers are stationed there, like very much. We had a glimpse of the tents from the long street of the officers' quarters; and after we had visited a few technical things in which I was too polite to show that I was hardly interested, we strolled over to where we could see the little white pyramids gleaming under the Stars and Stripes.

I had been afraid that all the cadets would have gone away to Flirtation Walk, with girls, but to my joy there were plenty left in camp. On chairs under the trees near by two or three ladies were sitting with some white-butterfly girls; and a crowd of cadets were talking to them.

"There's a great pal of mine, Mrs. Laurence," said Captain Collingwood. "She would love to know you, Lady Betty. Do you mind if I introduce you to each other?"

"See here, that means we shall be hitched up with all that lot of cadets," Potter objected, quite crossly. "What's the good of wasting time?"

I hurried to say that I shouldn't consider it a waste of time, that I should be delighted to meet Mrs. Laurence, and also a few sample cadets, if any could be provided for the consumption of an enquiring British tourist.

Captain Collingwood thought that one or two might be found who would not object to the sacrifice; and five minutes later I was having more fun than I had ever had before in my life.

Mrs. Laurence was sweet, and so tactful. She scarcely talked to me at all, except to ask me how I liked America, and a few of the things people are obliged to get off their minds when they meet a foreigner; and then she introduced five cadets.

I was terrified for a minute, because until I left home my whole (youthful) male experience consisted of one brother, three cousins, and two curates, dealt with separately and with long sleepy intervals between. I began to wonder how I could possibly manage five tall youths at once, and to rack my brains for the right kind of conversation; but before I should have had time to say "knife" to a curate, I found myself chatting away with those cadets as if I had grown up with them. I never once stopped to think what I should say next, and neither did they.

Some girls were introduced to me, too, but luckily they didn't seem to expect me to talk to them much, so I didn't. More and more cadets kept coming over from camp, and joining our group, and being introduced in agreeable droves, until I gave up even trying to remember their names.

There was one, though, in the first batch of five, whose name was easy to get hold of and keep in mind, because it was Smith. Besides, he was the best looking of all, which made classifying him a real pleasure.

110 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

The girls who spoke to Mr. Smith called him "Captain," perhaps jokingly, and I asked how he could be a captain and yet a cadet, unless it meant cricket. Then he explained that the cadets had all the different grades of officers, from Adjutant and Captain down to Sergeant, and wanted to know if there were any other questions I would care to ask. I said that there were, lots, but I wasn't sure if I might.

"I give you a permit," said he, in a military way.

So I began with the buttons. "I should like to know why you have so many—all those rows on your jackets; and it's only the middle row you seem to use for anything."

"We use the others to give away to girls, to remember us by," answered my cadet. "It's forbidden, but that's a detail. Or rather it's why the girls like to have them."

I stared. "None of yours are missing."

"Most of 'em are pinned on at present. It's that way with all of us. Our Plebs sew 'em on for us at night, and use the door for a thimble."

"Oh, what are Plebs, if you please? Are you allowed valets?"

"I guess they call 'em fags in your country. There are a lot of them lying around. Shall I have some caught and dragged here? They might squirm a bit, as they aren't used to ladies' society, but——"

I hastily protested against such a cruel exhibition, and went on with my questions. I asked what they did in winter, and how long they had to be cadets, and whether they were in a hurry to be officers.

"Not as long as the girls can put up with us as we are," said my cadet. "Some of them even pretend they like us better."

"I can quite understand that!" I exclaimed. And then they all laughed, and some of them applauded.

"The *really* important question is," said Captain or

Mr. Smith, "whether you are going to be an officers' or a cadets' lady."

I hadn't an idea what he meant, but I remembered Vic's saying that in the lower middle classes they sometimes call a man's wife his "lady." Perhaps, I thought, the expression had been brought over to the nicest people in America, in the *Mayflower*, which they all talk so much about; for certainly *some* of the people in her must have been cooks or in the steerage; there are too many descendants for the first class passengers alone. After considering for a minute I said in rather an embarrassed way that I wasn't "quite sure yet whether I would be either."

"You must be one or the other, you know, or you'll be like the bat in the fable who was neither bird nor beast, and so was out of all the fun on both sides. I may be prejudiced, but I advise you to be a cadets' lady. And you'd better decide now on account of to-night."

"To-night?" I repeated, puzzled.

"Yes, on account of making out your card. Say, Lady Betty, if you *are* going in with us, can I make out your card?"

Then arose a clamour. It appeared that they all wanted to make out the card—whatever it was. I asked if I couldn't have one from each, but it appeared that you couldn't do that. My cadet had spoken first, so he said that he would do it; but the others could give me bell-buttons and chevrons, and decorate fans for me instead.

"Do you like hops, Lady Betty?" enquired a perfect pet of a cadet, who looked like a cherub in uniform.

"Hops?" I wondered why he should ask me such an irrelevant question, but I answered as intelligently as I could. "I don't know much about them. I think they're graceful, but I don't like the smell."

He looked petrified. "The *smell*?"

112 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

"Yes. It makes one sleepy."

"I guess we won't give you much chance to be sleepy to-night," said he, "at our hop."

Then I understood. But what a funny thing to call a ball; a "hop!"

They explained, too, when they saw how stupid I was, that you were an "officers' lady" if you danced with them, and walked with them, and flirted with them, and didn't bother with cadets; or vice versa. Then I decided at once that I would be a cadets' lady, though I was sorry I had only one night to be it in. They were sorry, too, and showed their sorrow in so many nice ways that I enjoyed myself immensely, and quite saw how nice it must feel to be out, if you are a success. They wanted to draw lots for which cadet should take me to Flirtation Walk, but I said I had to go with Mr. Parker.

He must have been listening from a distance, (though he ought to have been talking with a pretty girl who had no hat,) for he came up to me at once, and announced that it was time to go now. He rather put on airs of having a right to tell me what I must do, and I didn't like it much, especially before those dear cadets, but it would have been childish to make a fuss. Besides, I was his guest.

I went, like a disagreeable lamb sulking on its way to the slaughter; but, thank goodness, I was engaged already for nearly all the dances, and most of them had to be split in two; there were so many cadets for them. (I think, by the by, I shall try to get Stan to take me to Sandhurst some day, to see if it is at all like West Point, and whether they have hops.)

Potter made fun of the cadets, and called them "white meat," and "little things that got in the way"; but when I asked a straight question he had to confess that he had

been one himself only six years ago. "I was twenty-two when I graduated," he said. "One of the youngest men in my class." Which was the same as telling me that he is twenty-eight now. Ten years older than I am! It makes him seem quite old.

Somehow, although he is so nice to me in most ways, he stirs me up to feel antagonistic, as though I wanted to contradict him, and not like things that he likes; and I believe it is the same with him about me, for I make his eyes look angry very often. I felt he was disappointed because I admired the cadets so much, and had promised so many dances, and I was in a mood to tease him. But I fancy he isn't the kind who would take teasing well; and the scenery he was showing me was so beautiful that presently I resolved to be good.

We saw Kosciusko's monument, and I would insist upon his telling me things about Kosciusko himself, though Potter didn't seem to think him important; and then we began winding our way along a most exquisite path overhanging the river, always shadowed by trees. Sometimes it was cut through a green arbour, with a light like liquid emeralds; sometimes it ran high on the rocks; sometimes it dipped down close to the water; but invariably there was just enough room for two, and no more, to walk side by side.

We met several couples—cadets and girls; young officers and girls;—sauntering or sitting down close together in out of the way places. But by and by we seemed to have passed beyond the inhabited zone. Then Potter asked me if I were not tired from so much walking, and if I wouldn't like to rest. I said no, and he promptly pretended to be done up, which I thought very silly; but of course I had to sit down by him on a rock with a green, moss-velvet cushion.

"This is what I've been longing for all day," said he.

I hadn't; and I was thinking about the cadets. But I agreed that it was beautiful.

"Yes, it is," he answered, looking at me. "I never saw anything so pretty. Say, Lady Betty, you're an awful flirt."

I did open my eyes at that. "A flirt!" I exclaimed. "I never had a chance to try being it."

"I guess you don't need to try. There's some things girls like you are born knowing. I've been miserable all the afternoon. Couldn't you see my agony?"

"I didn't notice," said I.

"Ah, that's the trouble. You weren't thinking of me. Of course, I oughtn't to have cared for those little boys," (some of them were inches taller than he) "but I couldn't help it. I kept saying inside, 'This is a foretaste of what I've got to suffer when she's staying with Katherine at The Moorings. I don't know when I've been so unpopular with myself. I don't see how I'm going to get along unless you'll be nice to me; right now.'"

"I am nice to you," I said. "As nice as I know how to be."

"I could teach you to be a lot nicer. Say, Lady Betty, let me, won't you?"

His eyes, though they are such a pale blue, had that silly, melting look in them that my cousin Loveland's have when he talks to me. "Let you do what?" I asked, almost snappishly, for a person sitting in such a lovely place.

"Teach you to like me. I fell all over myself in love with you the first minute I saw you."

"Day before yesterday!" I exclaimed. "What nonsense. You're poking fun at me. I don't believe in love at first sight—at least, I don't think I do. Anyhow, nobody could fall in love with *me* in that way."

"Couldn't they, though? That's all you know about it, then. All Americans will fall in love with you like that, and it's just what I want to guard against. I want you to be engaged to me before you go to Newport. Then I shall feel kind of safe."

"Dear me, are you really proposing, and it isn't in joke?" I asked. "I do wish you wouldn't."

"Would I propose to Lady Betty Bulkeley in joke?" he reproached me.

"The idea of proposing to any girl when you've only seen her three times!"

"What did I tell you about my friend in San Francisco? I was working slowly up to this, even then."

"Slowly!"

"Yes, very slowly. I think I've shown a great deal of patience. American girls—the beauties, I mean—are quite hurt if a fellow doesn't propose somewhere along in the first day or two. They think he can't appreciate their real worth, and that he deserves what he gets if some other chap walks away with them. Now, I'm not going to sit still on my perch and see anything else walking off with you."

I couldn't help laughing. "I'll call for help if I think there's any danger," said I; "but I can't promise more than that. I didn't come over to America to pick up a husband."

He looked at me rather queerly when I said that, almost as if he thought I had come for that express purpose, and was trying to conceal it. But, of course, he couldn't be so horrid as to suppose such a thing really, and I must have imagined the strange expression. If he only knew, I came away so that another girl might be sure to get a husband, and I'm not allowed to go back until he has been got.

"They're just growing around on blackberry bushes and in strawberry patches for you to pick and choose," said Potter, "and that's what worries me. I'm a wildly jealous fellow. I've got two month's leave so as to be with you at Newport, and I tell you I shall see a bright, beautiful crimson, if too many dudes come fooling around the shanty. Say, won't you just *play* we're engaged, anyhow, and see how you like it?"

But now I was really cross, and wouldn't hear a word more of such nonsense, so I jumped up, and he had to scramble up, too.

"If you've really proposed—which I doubt—" said I, "you must please understand that you've been formally refused. But I forgive you because I believe you must have been chaffing, and because it's my first proposal; so at all events I can't die without having had at least one. Now, do be sensible and take me back, or I shall have to find my way alone,—or else ask a strange cadet to pilot me."

That threat found a vulnerable spot; and he was not half bad on the way home—perhaps no worse than the name of the Walk allowed.

I was a good deal excited about the ball, as it was my very first. Sally Woodburn had looked at my things, and told me what to bring. Not that it was a hard choice, for I have only four frocks with me, in which I could go to a dance. The one Sally wanted me to wear at West Point is a little white thing, of embroidered India muslin. Thompson made it after one of Vic's, and it is a rag compared to Sally's and Mrs. Ess Kay's gorgeous things. But when Sally had done my hair in a new way, (they had left Louise behind, as there was no room for her), and fastened round my throat a lovely string of pearls she brought on purpose, I looked quite nice.

The "hop" was in a great big room which the cadets use for something or other, I forget what; and it was decorated with quantities of American flags. There were lots of girls—the youngest things! hardly any of them could have been out—but there were even more men; counting officers and cadets, at least two for each girl.

The card which my particular cadet had talked about making for me, was a programme, with all the dances and the men's names, and illuminations which he had put on himself. It was beautiful, and I told him that I would always keep it. I danced every dance, with two partners for each, and there was a cotillion afterwards with favours to remind the girls who got them, of West Point; little flags, and buttons, and bits of gold lace; but I was very lucky, for some of the friends I had made in camp had smuggled me special things, and I shall have quite a collection of sergeant's stripes and corporal's chevrons, belt buckles and beautiful bright bell-buttons with initials scratched on them.

I don't believe Vic had half so much fun at her first ball as I had at mine, although hers is so many seasons ago now that I can't remember what she said about it. I was only a little girl then, and she wasn't in the habit of telling me things, as she is now.

Although I didn't get to bed till after two, I was up early next morning, because I had promised my best cadets that I would be at morning parade, or whatever they call it, to say good-bye. Sally went with me, and it was quite an affecting parting. I shall never forget those dear boys if I live to be a hundred, though I can't remember any of their names, as after all I lost the card I meant to keep always.

VI

ABOUT THE PARK AND LOVE STORIES

ALL the preparations that Mrs. Ess Kay had to make for Newport kept us two more days in New York; and it was terribly hot, but I was not sorry to stay, because we did so many amusing things.

Mr. Doremus was detained too—by his tailor, he said—so we saw a good deal of him, as Mrs. Van der Windt had left for her Newport cottage. We did go to a roof garden entertainment, after all, and it was most fascinating, but quite without the feeling that you might fall off, which I had expected to have. I saw the moon coming up, and gilding thousands of roofs, and I couldn't help wondering which was the roof of that club where poor, handsome Jim Brett was employed; though of course it was impossible to speak of him to anyone except Vivace.

We lunched one day at an enormous and very fashionable red brick hotel called the Waldorf-Astoria, and went into a Turkish Room, and had delicious things to eat in a beautiful restaurant, which had not at all an out-of-season air, though Mrs. Ess Kay said that most of the well-groomed looking people whom I suspected of being leaders of the Four Hundred were only "trippers." I do wonder, by the way, why one always has an innate sense of contempt for trippers, and longs to be sniffy and show one's own superiority? We must all be trippers somewhere and sometimes, or we would never see anything of the world; indeed I suppose I am by way of being a tripper now.

But one never seems to regard one's self in such a light, or imagine that anybody else could be so undiscerning.

I hadn't known that a hotel could be as big as the Waldorf-Astoria, though Mrs. Ess Kay says there are several just about as large in New York, and she has heard there are one or two in Chicago, but she thanks Heaven she doesn't know anything personally about *that*. When she made this remark I remembered what Sally had told me in confidence about Mrs. Ess Kay's life before she began to qualify for the Four Hundred. But of course I did not make any allusion to the subject, for fear it was a skeleton in her closet. And Sally says that well-regulated Chicago people think New York a one-horse place compared to their town, which is really wonderful and most interesting, as I shall find out if I see it. I wish I could, but I suppose I shan't, as I came over to visit Mrs. Ess Kay, not to do sight-seeing.

The second day after we came back from West Point, as I went downstairs the first thing in the morning, I heard Mrs. Ess Kay at the telephone, which is in a little room, along a corridor off the fountain court.

She was having a long conversation with someone, laughing and chatting just as if she were talking to a visitor; and presently my name came in. "Yes, Lady Betty Bu——, no, not pronounced that way, my child. As if it were spelt B-U-C-K-, yes, that's right. Such a pretty girl, a perfect dear. I expect the men will be wild about her at Newport. Potter *raves* over her. Ha, ha, ha! Do you think so? Well, perhaps. I've known stranger things to happen. No, it's not her father, but her brother, who's the Duke; awfully good-looking. I wish he could have come too. But you see Sally wouldn't—you know what Sally *is*. No, she's never got over that old affair. Southern women are so romantic. Yes, I'll

120 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

bring dear little Betty with me if it won't tire you. She——"

Then I began to think I ought to let her know I was there, for one hates to eavesdrop. So I yelled at the top of my lungs that I was in the hall, waiting to go to breakfast, and couldn't help hearing every word she said. However, she didn't mind a bit, and called to me to come into the telephone room.

"I'm talking to a friend of mine who has just been moved back to her own apartment after getting over appendicitis," she explained. "Poor thing, she's such an indefatigable society woman, and she does so hate being stuck in the city at this season. I've just been promising to run in and see her this afternoon, and I'd like to take you if you'll go. She'd love to see you. I'll introduce you now by 'phone."

With that, she began to chat into the thing again, in a chummy sort of way which seemed quite uncanny, as I have always looked upon a telephone as an official kind of machine which you prepared for with fasting and prayer, and only had recourse to when strictly necessary for important business. "Here's Lady Betty," said Mrs. Ess Kay. "I'm going to introduce you. Now, Betty, take hold of the——"

"Oh, I can't. I don't know how. I never did," I objected, feeling as if she were going to force me into taking gas against my will.

She would have me try, so I did, as it's very difficult to oppose Mrs. Ess Kay even in the smallest thing. But I couldn't hear a word, only a horrid buzzing, so she had to let me off, and just tell me that the lady we were to call on was Mrs. Harvey Richmount Taylour.

"If you're going to stay long in America, you'll have to get used to the 'phone," said she. "We do half our

shopping, and some of our calling, and make about all our appointments that way. If we didn't, there'd be more cases of nervous prostration than there *are*, and goodness knows there are enough now, even since Blue Rays have come in. Many love affairs are carried on practically entirely by 'phone, and I've heard that in case of necessity, marriage ceremonies can be performed by it."

"How about divorces?" I asked. And I was quite serious, but Mrs. Ess Kay didn't seem to think the question worth an answer. So she switched off her friend, and rang up two or three tradespeople of whom she ordered scent, and chocolates, and some new books, and told a manicure to call. Then we went in to breakfast.

It appears that the manicure person is a great catch, and you are very lucky to get him without making an appointment long beforehand. He does things to your feet, too, though I dared not ask what; and Mrs. Ess Kay intended to stop in for him all the morning.

While she was talking about this, Sally was glancing over letters, and there was one in which she seemed particularly interested. She looked up from it suddenly, when Mrs. Ess Kay said she was not going out, and exclaimed, "Oh, then I may have Betty. How nice, I do so want to show her the Park."

"I'll go with you," Potter broke in quickly, but Sally shook her head.

"No, I want her to myself, thank you—just for this once."

Potter looked cross, but said no more, and it was arranged that Sally and I should start in about an hour. Mrs. Ess Kay thought we ought to get off at once, as it would be cooler; but for some reason Sally did not like that idea. Meanwhile, she ran out herself on an errand, but did not offer to take me.

Even people who have absolutely nothing to do except to amuse themselves appear to like waking up and having breakfast much earlier than we do. This morning, as usual, we had finished breakfast by half past nine, and by a quarter past ten Sally had come back to fetch Vivace and me for our walk.

I hadn't yet been shown Central Park. Mrs. Ess Kay said it was horrid out of season; but Sally didn't agree with her; and I thought it lovely, more like the Bois de Boulogne than our Park, and yet with an extraordinary individuality of its own. There were only a few people of our sort, riding or driving, but lots of children were playing about, and it was wonderful that the trees and grass and flowers could have kept so fresh through such tremendous heat. I'm sure if we had weather like that in England the whole vegetable kingdom would go on strike.

Whether it was the beauty of the Park, or whether it was something in herself, I don't know, but Sally Woodburn was in a sentimental mood. She is generally full of fun, in her soft, quiet little way; but this morning she was all poetry and romance. She quoted Tennyson, and several modern American poets, whose names I was ashamed to say I didn't even know, as their verses seemed charming; and when she had found a certain narrow, shady path which she had been looking for, suddenly she said, "Let's talk about love. What do you think about love, Betty?"

"I don't know anything about it yet, except from books," said I. "Mother doesn't like my reading modern novels much, and we haven't many in the library, for Vic reads French ones and hides them. But there are other books besides novels that tell about love—some heavenly ones."

"I should think there were," said Sally. "But I didn't ask you what you knew; I asked what you *thought*. Have

you ever thought about what it would be like to be in love?"

"Yes," I had to admit, shamefacedly, for as she is not a man, luckily it wasn't necessary to tell a fib. "Have you?"

"I *know*, once for all," said Sally, in a changed voice. "That is why I wanted to talk about it to you, before you really begin life over here. Perhaps—it depends on your opinions of love—I'll tell you my little story. I don't tell it to people. But maybe I will to you, this morning. We shall see."

"Is it a sad story, dear?" I asked.

"Yes. It's sad."

"Perhaps it may end well yet, though," I tried to comfort her.

Sally shook her head. "It can't, in this world. And the saddest part of all is that it was my own fault. But I didn't understand the relative value of things when I lost the *one* thing in the world that can make real happiness for a woman. I should like *you* to understand them while you still have time."

"And I should love to hear your story, if it won't make you too sad thinking of it," I said.

"Oh, I am always thinking of it. It's never really out of my mind for a minute. It's there, you know, like an undertone; just as when you live near the sea, there's always the sound of the waves underlying every other sound, though you mayn't be listening for it."

"Then tell me," I said.

"Not yet. I haven't asked you the questions yet, which will show me when you answer them, whether you need to hear the story or not. Could you imagine yourself marrying without first being in love?"

"No-o," I said thoughtfully. "Not when it really

124 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

came to it. But Vic says that's all nonsense; that no woman, no matter how much she thinks herself in love, ever stops in love with her husband. The thing is to marry a man who will let you do as you like; and of course he must be rich."

Sally sighed. "Well, dear, she's your sister, and I'm just nothing to you at all, but I'd like to tell you to forget about her advice, and not care whether a man is rich or poor, or even well born, if only he's *made* himself a gentleman, body and heart and soul, and is strong and clever enough to take care of you."

The minute she said that, the image of Jim Brett rose up before my eyes. I think, though he is poor, and perhaps of humble birth, that the girl he marries will be happy—and well taken care of.

"You'll hear a lot of talk about money at Newport," she went on, "too much. Among some of the people you'll be with, money's of more importance than anything else. Two or three rich young men are certain to ask you to marry them—very nice fellows they may be, and they will show you heaps of attention—all those that Cousin Katherine will let come near you—and as you're so young and inexperienced, you may lose your head a little bit. But do remember that losing your head and being flattered and amused, isn't falling in love. A man must be able to make you love him for himself, and that self must be worth loving; for nothing else is any good in the end. And now I'll tell you my story—just in a few words—because it will give you something to think about.

"I'm thirty-two now. When I was nineteen—a year older than you—I cared for a man, and he for me. We cared for each other—terribly. But he was poor; and not only that, he came from people whom mine looked down upon. We loved each other so much, though, that I

would have married him in spite of all; but my relations thought it would ruin my life, and they advised, and persuaded, and implored and insisted, until I was weak enough to give the man up. They took me to Europe, and because I had some money an Italian prince we met in Rome wanted to marry me. They almost argued me into consenting, and though they didn't quite, the news went home to Kentucky that I was engaged. The man I really loved—loved dearly all the time, though I was trying to forget him—believed it. Why shouldn't he, since I'd given him up for the reasons I had? He was Catholic, and he went into a monastery we have in Kentucky, and became a monk. No one ever wrote to me about it. All my friends thought the less I heard of him the better. And two years later, when I went back home—*not* engaged, and thinking in my heart that there was, and always would be, only one man for me in the world—it was to learn that that man had taken the final vows which would separate him from earthly love for ever.

"Oh, Betty, you don't know what I suffered. I'd been saying to myself that when I saw him again—as I meant to—I would know by his eyes at the first glance whether he still cared as much as ever, and if he did, I would *ask* him to marry me. But I never saw him again, except with the eyes of my heart; and I always see him so. Not an hour passes that I don't see him so."

"You poor darling!" I exclaimed. And there was a note in her voice that made my eyelids sting. "How little I guessed. And you seem so cheerful and even merry."

"One isn't in the world to be a wet blanket," said Sally. "Besides, one isn't actively miserable every minute, for years, because one has thrown away one's chance of real happiness. One gets along contentedly enough,

except in the bad hours, when, instead of being a mild grey, the world is ink-black. But I haven't told you this to get sympathy, dear. It hasn't been quite easy telling, for I don't talk much about the deep-down things in myself. I've told you in the hope that you'll remember me, and my wasted years, if *your* chance comes to be happy—even if it should be a chance which you think, in a worldly way, wouldn't be prudent, or what your people would like. People have no *right* to try and order our lives, no matter how near they may be to us. It's *we* who have to live our lives, not they."

For a minute we were both silent; and then Sally said quietly, as if she were glad to speak, "Here comes someone we've seen before. Do you recognise him? And shall you bow?"

Vivace gave such a leap that his leash, which I'd been holding carelessly, was jerked out of my hand. It was my brown man who was coming—Jim Brett.

My face did feel red! Vivace was making such a fuss over him, that Sally could hardly help guessing whose the dog had been before he was mine. But I made the best of it. "Of course I recognise him, and of course I shall bow," said I. "He was *very* kind to me on the dock, when I was at letter B."

Sally didn't make any remark about Vivace's capers, though by this time he was wagging all over with joy at his master's feet, and jumping up to his knees. I was grateful to her.

In another moment we three had met, in the shady path, far away from everybody else, and Vivace began running back and forth between his master and me, as if he wanted to make us good friends, and not hurt either of our feelings.

"How do you do?" said I, holding out my hand.

"What a coincidence, meeting you here. And my dear little dog that *somebody* sent me, does seem to take an extraordinary fancy to you, doesn't he?"

Mr. Jim Brett laughed, and kept his hat off, which made him look very nice with the dappling green and gold light waving over his thick, short black hair, and his forehead, which is whiter than the rest of his face.

He had on better clothes than he had worn on shipboard, but they were blue serge, with the air of having been bought ready made at a cheap shop. In spite of them, however, he looked very handsome, and every inch of him a gentleman. I don't think many men, even in Stan's set, could wear those badly-cut things and look as he did in them, though he does have to travel in the steerage.

I asked Sally if I might introduce Mr. Brett to her, and she said yes, and smiled up so sweetly that I was delighted, because, for all her talk about Nature's noblemen, I felt I didn't know her well enough to be quite sure how she would take it. But she talked to him charmingly, and complimented him upon his bravery on shipboard. "Every one of us admired you for it," she said, "and I'm very glad to meet you this morning."

Mr. Brett thanked her, and of course said how pleased he was, too. "I am taking a holiday," he added, looking at me. I was glad to hear that, because, seeing him out at this time, the thought had occurred to me that he might have lost his employment at the club. But I only answered that it was a lovely day for a holiday, and that I didn't believe he could find a better place to spend part of it than in Central Park.

"Have you fed the squirrels yet?" he asked.

"Oh, no, can one do that?" I exclaimed. "I should love it."

"May I go and get some peanuts?" he said to Sally.

"Do," she said, in her pleasant, friendly way, which was just as nice for him as it had been for Stan, or nicer. "We will go on to the wistaria arbour and wait for you. There are always lots of squirrels there."

Vivace broke away from me again and followed him, but still Sally seemed to take no notice. "That's certainly a very handsome fellow," she said, "and we can be sure that he's worthy to be trusted, because the wrong sort of men don't jump overboard at sea to save the lives of children they don't know. That is why I feel perfectly safe in being nice to him, and letting you be nice. I reckon he is a Southern man."

"How can you tell?" I asked.

"Oh, a little by that good-looking brown face of his, perhaps, but more by his way of speaking. You English people lump us all together, for our 'American accent,' but we can tell whether a person is from Massachusetts, or New York, or Illinois, or Kentucky, and so on, just as you know Devonshire from Lancashire."

The wistaria arbour, which we soon reached, was like a fairy bower hung with thousands of amethyst lamps, burning perfume instead of oil; and the moment we sat down a troop of the fairy residents, cleverly disguised as grey squirrels, with adorable little faces, began excitedly to talk us over. With heads on one side, they criticised our features, our dresses, our hats, and finally approved of them so far as to decide that we were creatures they might know. They stole nearer, by twos, by fours, then raced away again, grey and soft as undyed ostrich feathers, blown by the sweet-smelling breeze, when they saw my brown man coming back with Vivace.

I was afraid that Vivace would make a dash and frighten them, but he evidently knows how to treat squir-

rels as equals, not as edibles, for he behaved himself like the little brindled gentleman that he is. Gravely he looked on as Mr. Brett produced six small, brown paper bags, crammed full of the most extraordinary objects. They looked something like wood carvings of unripe bean pods, but it appeared that they were peanuts. They smelt good, rather like freshly-roasted coffee, and when you shelled them out of their woody pods, they were large, fat beads, covered with a thin brown skin. I couldn't help feeling as if I had known Mr. Brett for a long time, as he sat by us on the bench under the wistaria, helping Sally and me feed the squirrels, and shelling peanuts for us to eat, too. I do believe there must be something special about peanuts, which gives you a homey sort of feeling, if you share them with people. They form a sort of bond of good fellowship, and I can't fancy ever being prim with a man, after you had eaten peanuts with him.

Mr. Brett didn't tell us much about himself, but from the few things he did tell, I gathered the impression that he has led an open-air, adventurous sort of life. He showed that he knows a great deal about horses, and I rather hope he has been a cowboy, like "The Virginian," in a delightful book I have found in Mrs. Ess Kay's library; indeed, I imagine the hero of that story must have looked like Jim Brett. It is a splendid type.

Sally and he talked about books; he spoke about some college in the West where he had been, and I was glad that he was a University man; though why I should care I don't know. Anyway, Stan would be at sea, and floundering, in the subjects which my brown man of the steerage and Sally Woodburn discussed while the squirrels frisked about their shoulders. But then, Stan doesn't care to talk for too long about anything except

hunting, or shooting, or polo, or motoring;—not even bridge, at which Vic says he loses a great deal of money.

We stopped in the wistaria arbour for more than an hour, as I knew by my bracelet watch, when Sally said suddenly we must go—though I hadn't dreamed till then that we had been half as long. I shook hands with Mr. Brett for good-bye, and so did Sally; but nobody spoke about our meeting again, as perhaps we should if he were in Mrs. Ess Kay's set. It seemed very sad, and irrevocable, somehow, and I had a heavy sort of feeling that life can be full of hard things.

His eyes looked wistful, and I said what I couldn't have said to a man of my own rank. "I've kept those roses you sent me by that dear, funny little black boy, all this time in water, and they are fresh still, though a lot of others I have had since are faded," I told him; and in that mood I didn't care whether Sally heard or not.

The brown man's face flushed up, and the wistful look in his eyes brightened into something which I felt was gratitude for my rather silly speech. "I think those roses will hate to die," he said.

"Perhaps I shall press them in a book," I answered, "to remind me of my first hours in America."

Then we parted, and there was a fuss with Vivace, who had to be taken up in my arms, or he would have choked himself with his collar, in his desperate struggles to get free. He whimpered even then for a few minutes, but soon he was comforted, and visibly made an effort to content himself with the fact that he was my dog.

I set him down on the ground, and Sally and I walked on together without speaking. But at last she said, "Penny for your thoughts, deah?"

"I was wondering about—class distinctions in America?" I answered. "I think—oh, I *do* think it's very

silly of you to have any at all. I always supposed, till I knew you and Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox, that one person was considered just as good as another in America. And it ought to be like that, in a new country, where you haven't an aristocracy."

"We have two aristocracies," said she. "We go one better than you, for you have only one. We have our Old Families (maybe they wouldn't seem very old to you) and we have Wealth. They both think as much of themselves as your aristocracy does—and mighty little of each other."

"I could understand an aristocracy of brains, in a land like America," I went on, quite fiercely, "but it's no good breaking off from the old country at all if you're to hamper yourselves with anything else. Now if I hadn't heard Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox and Mrs. Van der Windt talking, I should have supposed that in America a man like Mr. Brett, for instance, could be received *anywhere*. As it is, I suppose—no, nobody could despise him. For myself, I'm *proud* to know such a brave man. But—but of course we're not likely to meet him again, are we?"

"In Society?" laughed Sally. "Poor fellow, it doesn't look much like it now, does it? Though I believe he's a man in a thousand, and worth six of any of those that Cousin Katherine will let you know—counting Potter, though he *is* my relative."

"It seems a pity," I said, with a sigh for the mistakes of the whole world—or something.

"What's a pity?"

"Oh, I hardly know. Everything. Isn't it?"

"Yes. And I'm sure that's what our poor, handsome friend is thinking."

"Do you suppose he—minds?"

"I reckon he would like to go on being acquainted with

192 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

you, Betty, and have the chances of other men. You're not an unattractive girl, you know—or maybe you don't know. And he's human. I have a sort of idea he'll try and make some change in his way of life, so that it may be possible to meet you again."

When Sally said this, I had the oddest sensation, like a prickling in all my veins. I longed to ask her if she were joking, or if she really did think that Jim Brett was enough interested in me to take so much trouble. But the words came only as far as the tip of my tongue, and stuck to it as if they had been glued there.

VII

ABOUT SKY-SCRAPERS AND BEAUTIFUL LADIES

IN the afternoon Mrs. Ess Kay and I in our thinnest muslins went out in the motor. We whizzed up Fifth Avenue for several "blocks" (as she called them), turned into an expensive-looking side street and stopped before one of the most enormous buildings I ever saw in my life. It seemed only half finished, for the steel columns of its skeleton were still visible around the ground floor and the street before it was still cluttered with bricks and boards and rubbish. In the hallway men were working like active animals in an immense cage. Suddenly from amongst them I saw emerge a beautifully dressed little girl foaming with lace frills, led by a trained nurse in a grey and white uniform. They were actually being let out of the lift, which had swooped down with appalling swiftness, by a man in livery.

"Good Heavens," I exclaimed, "what a queer place for a child and its nurse to be in."

"My dear girl, they live there," said Mrs. Ess Kay rather scornfully. "That is Mrs. Harvey Richmount Taylour's little Rosemary with her nurse."

"People live on top of those poles like Jack in a beanstalk!" I exclaimed. "How appalling."

As I looked through the hallway up sprang the lift once more, fierce and swift as one of the rockets which I used as a child to be afraid might strike the angels. A minute of suspense and it swooped down again with two girls in

it. I felt as if it were a thing I oughtn't to be seeing somehow; it was so much like spying on the digestive apparatus of a skeleton.

"You see," explained Mrs. Ess Kay, "the Taylours and other people were frightfully anxious to get in. The rest of the building will be finished soon, and this is going to be one of the swellest apartment houses in New York."

"This an apartment house!" cried I, thinking of the dull streets in London, where almost every door has "Apartments" printed over it in gilt letters, or else hanging crooked and dejected on a card. "But, oh—perhaps you mean it's *flats*."

"For goodness sake, don't say 'flats' to Margaret Taylour," exclaimed Mrs. Ess Kay, marshalling me into the mammoth skeleton. "Over here, only common people live in flats; our sort have 'apartments.'"

"It's just the other way round with us," I explained. "Those who have flats would be furious if you said they lived in apartments."

"You English are *so* quaint in some ways," remarked Mrs. Ess Kay, and though I didn't answer, I was surprised. It's all well enough for us to think Americans odd, and we are accustomed to that, for everybody says they are; but that they should think *our* ways comic does seem extraordinary, almost improper.

By this time we were in the lift, which shut upon us with a vicious snap, and then tossed us up towards the roof of the world. I do hope one doesn't experience the same sensation in dying; though in that case it would be worse going down than up.

Before I had time to do more than gasp, we were at the top; and as we waited for an instant outside Mrs. Harvey Richmond Taylour's door, I should have liked to pinch my cheeks lest my fright had left me pale.

Vic has a friend who lives in a flat near the Park for the Season, and once I was taken there. I thought it quite beautiful, but though the friend's a Countess and very rich, the flat is poor compared with this topheavy nest of Mrs. Taylour's.

In a white drawing-room where the only spots of colour were the roses—masses of pink roses in gold bowls—a Madonna-like being was reclining in a green and white billow of a lace tea gown, on a white sofa. She held out both hands to Mrs. Ess Kay, and looked at me, apologising for not getting up.

When you come to examine her, the only thing really Madonna-like about Mrs. Harvey Richmount Taylour is her way of doing her hair. It's parted in the middle, and folds softly down in brown wings on either side of rather a high forehead, white enough to match her drawing-room. She has gently curved eyebrows, too; but under them her dark eyes are as bright and sharp as a fox-terrier's. She has pale skin, red lips, and thin features, with a stick-out chin, cut on the same pattern as Mrs. Ess Kay's though it isn't as square yet, because she is years younger—perhaps not more than twenty-eight.

Mrs. Ess Kay introduced us, in a more precise way than we have at home, and Mrs. Taylour said that she was very happy to meet me, which I should have thought particularly kind, if I hadn't found out that it's a sort of formula which Americans think it polite to use.

She talked to me a good deal, and wanted to know how I liked America, of course; I was sure she would do that.

Then Mrs. Ess Kay explained that I was interested in her apartment being up so high, and thought her plucky to live in it before the house was finished. This amused Mrs. Taylour very much.

"We are just thankful to be in it," she said. "I was

136 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

tired out with housekeeping, the servant question is too awful."

"I see you've a trained nurse-maid for Rosemary," said Mrs. Ess Kay. "We met them going out."

"Isn't Rosemary a pet?" Mrs. Taylour asked me, as if she were speaking of somebody else's little girl.

"Sweet," I said. "Has she been ill?"

"No. Do you think she looks delicate?"

"It was the hospital nurse——" I began; but Mrs. Taylour laughed.

"Oh, I suppose that *would* strike you as funny. But we often have them for our children. We poor New York women have so much to do socially, we have to be relieved of *all* feeling of responsibility, if we don't want to come down with nervous prostration. I shall hang onto this same nurse for years if she'll stay; she's *so* good, and only ten dollars a week. When Rosemary grows up and comes out, she will be her maid, you know, Lady Betty. Do you ever have trained nurse-maids in England?"

"No," I said. "Fancy!"

"Oh, it's a splendid thing for a girl—nothing like it. You see the woman looks after her like a maid and a nurse both; makes sure her bath's the right temperature, takes care of her if she gets the grippe; sits up and gives her beef tea or chocolate after balls, massages her, and things like that. I used to have one myself, but a woman after she's married is different from a Bud. She *must* have a French woman for her hair if she respects herself."

I said meekly that I supposed so; and then Mrs. Taylour left me to myself for a few minutes, while she talked to Mrs. Ess Kay. They compared notes about appendicitis, which they called the fashionable complaint, and Mrs. Taylour suddenly exclaimed:

"Oh, my dear, I have had just *the* smartest idea. As

soon as Doctor Pearson will let me go to Blue Bay I tell you I mean to wake them up there. What I'll do, is to have an appendicitis lunch. It'll be rather *conducive*, won't it?"

"You *are* the most original thing!" exclaimed Mrs. Ess Kay. "How are you going to manage?"

"Oh, nobody shall be invited except those who have had it; and the great feature will be the decorations; operating instruments, you know, and hospital nurses, and—oh, I don't know what all yet, but I'm thinking it out. It was Cora Pitchley's Cat Lunch that put it in my head." She turned to me. "In America we give Women's lunches," she said. "Only women are asked, or a Cat Lunch couldn't be worked. Is it so with you, too?"

"I'm afraid our women would think it a bore if there were no men," I answered. "Anyway, there always are some, I believe. I'm not out yet. Do tell about the Cat Lunch."

"Oh, it was only a pretty smart trick of my friend, Mrs. Pitchley's. She was a rich young widow from the West, with millions, and very pretty and lively, so some of the old cats snubbed her and tried to keep her out of New York society, when I was introducing her around. But she got her foot in at last, so tight they couldn't help themselves, for the Van Tortens took her up, and she was *made*. So what did she do but give a big lunch, inviting all the women who had been the meanest to her, and not another soul. The *whole* table decoration consisted of cats; vases made of cats; flower-arrangements shaped like cats; and a little gold cat with emerald eyes for each woman to take away with her, so she wouldn't forget the lunch in a hurry. And would you believe it, not one of them saw the joke till *Smart Sayings* got hold of it, and published an account of the function next week."

"What did the women do?" I asked.

"Nothing, but feel cattier than before. She's richer than ever now, for she's married a man worth twenty millions, and the first thing he did was to give orders to Céleste, her dressmaker, to turn out two new dresses for his wife, every week of the year without fail, not one of them to cost less than two hundred and fifty dollars. It was such a strain on Céleste, thinking of new ideas, that she had to give it up after the first year, though it nearly broke her heart."

"I should have thought it would be a strain having the dresses to wear," said I. "Fancy getting passionately attached to one frock, but never being able to wear it more than once or twice, on account of your duty to the new ones always coming towards you in a long, relentless procession, down the years. I should hate it."

"I wouldn't," said Mrs. Taylour. "I can't have too many new things, and I always change each scrap of furniture and decoration in my own rooms every year, so that Mr. Taylour won't get tired of them. He's such a nervous man. But you'll meet Cora Pitchley at Newport. Her house is there. She's a type of an American woman, just as bright as she can be. Her second husband was a wholesale dry goods man years ago, but most people have forgotten that, now he's worth his millions, and he's got the most gorgeous place, quite like one of your old castles. The worst of it is, his mother lives with them, and when she was showing the bride—Cora—over the house (which was decorated pretty weirdly for the first wife,) the old lady kept explaining: 'This is the Louise Seize room; this is the Queen Anne room.' Cora just looked at the things, and said: 'What makes you think so?' Smart, wasn't it? But Cora's changed everything inside the house now. She loves change. She's even changed her

birthday, so as to have it in leap year; and as for her mind, she changes it entirely at least six times a day; says that's why women have nicer minds than men; they change them oftener. But I've gossiped enough about a person you don't know, Lady Betty. Let's talk about England. I run over to Paris for a month or two most years, but I've only been twice to England. I did all the sights, though, didn't miss anything. I gave four days to London alone. Candidly, I don't think your women dress nearly as well as we do, or hold themselves as well, but perhaps you're more *feminine* looking, take you all in all. I don't mean anything *personal*, of course. But I *do* think your men are lovely. I met a perfectly charming Member of Parliament, and he invited me to tea on the terrace.

ch strawberries and cream. But I'm afraid I hurt his feelings. I said I couldn't help thinking 'House of Commons' a most insulting name, and if we called our Senate anything like that we couldn't get an American man who respected himself to go into it. But English people are so queer. They don't seem to mind admitting that there is a class above theirs."

"Betty doesn't need to know anything about that," said Mrs. Ess Kay. "She is on the highest pinnacle."

"Oh, dear no," said I. "There are the Royalties."

"Don't you think you are just as *good*?" asked Mrs. Taylour.

"I never thought about it in that way," I answered, stupidly. For of course I hadn't.

"Surely you don't bob to them?"

"Indeed we do," I protested.

"Well then, I *wouldn't*," said Mrs. Taylour, firmly. "I'd have my head cut off first, especially before I'd curtsy to a Man."

Quite a colour flew into her face as she asserted her in-

140 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

dependence, and Mrs. Ess Kay must have seen that the invalid was getting excited, for she rose quickly to go.

"Come, Betty," said she, and I came.

The lift plunged us down through the inner workings of the skeleton. I had the sensation that it was dropping away from under my feet, and that as I dangled above it like a wobbly little balloon my head had been left behind somewhere near the top. But I didn't leave my heart behind in Mrs. Taylour's flat.

VIII

ABOUT NEWPORT AND GORGEOUSNESS

I WAS anxious to travel in an American train, so Mrs. Ess Kay said we might go by rail to Newport, instead of by boat as she had intended.

I know it was very wrong in principle, but when we got to the Grand Central Station, (or Depot, as perhaps I ought to call it,) I did wish that slavery existed again, so that I could have bought two or three of those delightful *café-au-lait*-coloured porters in grey livery and red caps. There were several I would have given anything to have to take home with me, and make pets of; but I suppose even if they had been for sale, they would have come too expensive and I should have had to give them up; for their eyes alone, to say nothing of their pleasant white grins, would have been worth pounds and pounds. As for their voices, they were the sweetest I'd heard in America, soft, and a little throaty, with a peculiar quality, quite different from the voice of a person who hasn't been dipped in *café au lait*. With their vivid red caps, their brilliant eyes, and their lightning-flash smiles, they looked to me more like great wonderful, tropical birds than human beings, and they seemed so honey-luscious in their good nature that I'm sure all the things that serious and learned people say in England about the "dangers of the increasing coloured population in America" must be nonsense. Serious and learned people do make such mistakes, through never seeing the fun in anything; and every few years they find out that they have

been quite wrong in what they have taught with so much trouble, about comets and microbes and men, and other progressive things.

We had a number of these tropical birds that have been tamed to serve the railway, to help us with our bags and things getting into the train, although there were Louise and a couple of Mrs. Ess Kay's footmen as well. I looked at their brown hands, and they were quite pink inside, as pink as mine. I don't know why this gave me a shock, but it did. Perhaps one had the feeling that the nice creatures were only painted to play their parts, or that their white souls—just like ours—were striking through their skins.

It was a beautiful train. Even the engine was different from our kind, much fiercer, and reared its head higher, like a wild stag compared to a stout but reliable ox. Our carriage had no compartments in it, but was just one long wide, moving corridor, all plate glass windows and mirrors, and painted panels, and velvet arm chairs dotted about, rather like a hotel drawing-room on wheels.

There were a good many people in it when we got in, which annoyed Mrs. Ess Kay so much that she wished she had borrowed a private car from a friend who would have loved lending it. But I was glad she hadn't, for the people were part of the fun. Mrs. Ess Kay was sure they were nobodies, because she didn't happen to know any of their faces; but perhaps they were thinking the same thing about her.

Anyway, they were mostly women and all pretty and perfectly dressed, as even quite common people appear to be in America. I haven't caught sight of a dowdy woman since I came. None of their frocks hitch up in front and dip down behind, as you see people's doing if you are taken to a shop in Oxford Street or even sometimes in Bond

Street; and their belts always point beautifully down at the waist, although it *isn't* the Season in New York.

The train was a fast one, and simply hurled itself and us through space, as if we had got onto the tail of a comet by mistake; but it hardly waggled at all, so that we could have studied the scenery nicely if we had been able to see it behind the advertisements.

Passing the outskirts of New York, it seemed as if every villa, even the quite smart ones, did their own washing. The gardens—which Sally told me to call back yards—were just as full of clean clothes as the meadows were of advertisement hoardings, and I rather wondered why some enterprising agents didn't go round and offer the people big prices for painting Unceda Biscuit on their petticoats and shirts.

We tore through such charming places with fascinating houses built of wood, among parks of feathery green trees, that I was sure Newport could be no prettier; but Mrs. Ess Kay spoiled the most picturesque one for me by saying that it was practically settled by retired butchers and tailors. According to Mrs. Ess Kay and her brother, all you have to do to be sure of being rich in America, is to decide to be either a tailor or a butcher, so it seems quite simple, and I'm surprised that everybody doesn't do it. Only if you do, it appears there is no use in your going to Newport until you've lived it down; which, of course, must be a drawback.

Just as I had got rather giddy from looking out of the window, a boy (exactly like the boys in melodrama who begin by selling papers and end by saving the heroine from the villain) came into the car, piled up to his head with novels and magazines. He scattered a lot over us, like manna, without asking us to pay, but just as I had got passionately interested in a short story he came back and

144 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

began to gather everything up. Seeing that I clung to my lot, Potter bought them all for me, before I could stop him.

There were two books and four magazines, with superlatively good-looking, well-groomed young men and divinely lovely girls for the heroes and heroines. The story I was most interested in had a hero like Mr. Brett; but it was disappointing in the end, because he married a short plump girl with black eyes, and somehow it spoiled the realism, as I couldn't fancy he would really have cared so dreadfully for a girl like that. Anyway, it put me out of the mood for reading any more stories and I began glancing over the advertisements. At least, I glanced at first, but soon I was absorbed; for they were wonderful.

I had never dreamed that there were such kind, thoughtful men in business as the ones who advertised in those fat American magazines,—and so clever, too; they seemed to have spent their whole past lives simply in studying things, so that eventually they could make you happy and save you trouble.

They lived only for that, those incredibly nice men. There were photographs of some of them with their advertisements, so that you could know what they were really like, and have even more confidence in them than you would if you hadn't seen their style of features. There were two or three whose profiles I could *never* get to feel at home with, even if I had been born with one of them; but the majority were brave, energetic,—oh! terribly energetic-looking men, as indeed they would need to be, if they were really to accomplish all the things they promised, not only for you but for the hundreds of thousands of other people who might be inclined to put them to the test.

There were things like this in the magazines,—all the magazines:

"Listen to me, Miss (or Madam). I have something to say which will interest You. Do you want a Perfect Complexion? Don't move. Sit still in your chair. Cut out this Coupon. Slip it into a stamped envelope, and we will give You what You want by return of post."

"Why Suffer? You have Headache. We have the Cure. We ask nothing better than to take away the One and give you the Other."

"Let us lend you a Beautiful Diamond Ring to wear till you are tired of it. When you are, we will take it back, and return you all but five per cent. of your money."

"Don't come to Us. Let us come to You, and bring You Something. You have always Wanted Health, Wealth, Wisdom."

"We would like to give You some Friendly Advice. We don't want a Red Cent for it."

"You are going to have a Party, and you are worried. Don't worry. Just 'phone to us, and we will arrange Everything for you better than you could yourself, with no trouble to you and your servants."

There were so many splendid things to have, to wear, and to eat, advertised in the same kind, fatherly way, that I felt as if I had unconsciously yearned for each one of them more than for anything else in my life, and now it had been put into my head in all its fatal fascination, I couldn't possible exist another day without sending for it, to one in that procession of noble, self-sacrificing, American advertisers. I felt, too, that if anything disagreeable should happen to me, like a railway or motor car accident, I could spend the rest of my existence lying down, and still the splendid things would come running to me, if I just 'phoned or flung a stamp into space.

I mentioned something of the sort to Sally. "I wonder

146 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

they don't offer to choose you a husband," said I. "I didn't know advertisements could be so interesting."

"What about your own?" she asked. "They're a hundred times quainter."

I thought hard about the *Morning Post* and *The Queen*, but couldn't remember anything extraordinary in the advertising line, and said so.

"Perhaps you, being English, don't see anything extraordinary about a clergyman's wife offering to exchange a canary bird for six months' subscription to *Punch*; or the widow of an officer earnestly desiring an idiot lady to board with her; or a decayed gentlewoman inviting the public to give her five pounds; but we, being American, do," replied Sally. "Why, I'd rather read the advertisements in some of your morning papers and ladies' weeklies than I would eat."

"Talking of eating, it's lunch-time," said Potter. "There'll be a big menagerie feeding in the dining-car, but there's no good waiting for it to finish, as then there'll be no food left."

So we took his suggestion; and there was a crowd, but he had secured a table for four, and we squeezed ourselves into the places.

I have travelled abroad with Mother and Vic, where there were Americans in the dining-car, and they have been cross because they didn't get served quickly and they have said things. But in this car going to Newport, you forgot what you had had last before the next course came, yet nobody seemed to mind. They were as patient as lambs, and simply took what was given them when they could get it, although they looked as if they were used to everything very nice at home. I suppose it must have been because they were all Americans together, eating American things, with American waiters to wait upon them

and no foreigners who ought to know they wouldn't stand that sort of nonsense, hanged if they would.

Some of Mrs. Ess Kay's servants had gone on before us, and some were in our train. Exactly how it was managed, I don't know; but things that would worry us into grey-haired graves don't seem to bother Americans at all; and there was the motor waiting when we arrived at the end of our journey, with a private motor omnibus for the servants and luggage.

Sometimes it is rather a pretty sight at the station where you have to get out for Battlemead, or for the village, when one of the best trains from Town comes in, especially if Mother or anyone at other big places in the neighbourhood should be having a house party. There are several rather good victorias with nice sleek horses, a handsome brougham or two, a motor car or two, to say nothing of dog carts and phaetons. But it is a poor show compared to the scene at Newport. I felt suddenly as if I were at the theatre, and the curtain had just gone up on a brilliant new act.

There was a crowd of gorgeous carriages; and jet-black varnish, gold and silver harness, and horses' brown and chestnut backs all glittered blindingly in the sun. But there were even more motors than carriages, it seemed; or else they were more conspicuous; and many were being driven by beautiful girls in muslins such as we would wear to a garden party, with nothing on their pretty heads except their splendid hair, dressed everlastingly in the same way.

Now, I saw Mrs. Ess Kay and Potter in their element. There was no suggestion that the people were not good enough for them, here. Mrs. Ess Kay radiated smiles, bowing cordially right and left, sometimes even more cordially than her friends bowed in return. Potter was taking

148 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

off his straw hat and waving it. There were evidently no nobodies here. They were delighted to see everybody, for Everybody was Somebody, and some, but not all, of the Everybodies were delighted to see them. Sally alone remained unmoved; and I was glad to have her to keep me in countenance, in this new act, where I knew none of the players or what part I should be called upon to take by and by.

I had heard so much that was dazzling about Newport, which I had imagined a great white city by the sea, that the part I saw first after leaving the railway station was distinctly a blow. "*This* quiet, half-asleep village the greatest watering place of America, perhaps of the world!" I said to myself, almost scornfully; but when we had bowled into Bellevue Avenue, where Mrs. Ess Kay said that her cottage was, I began to understand.

I wasn't sure at first sight what I did think of the great splendid houses, with mere pocket-handkerchief lawns such as people would have for suburban villas at home; but they gave me a tremendous impression of concentrated wealth. This seemed a place where everybody was rich, where millions were at a discount, and I thought—whatever else I did think—that it would be a place to stop away from unless you were happy—happy and strong and gay.

But there was one thing I was very sure of. The Avenue itself was more full than our Park in the topmost height of the Season.

People don't look happy, driving in the Park, not even the pretty people. I have found that, whenever I have been, and though that isn't so very often yet, Vic says it is really and truly always the same.

The great beauties look bored, and some of them have their faces painted and the air of wearing transformations; but not one of the charming women driving up and

down Bellevue Avenue that afternoon looked bored, and hardly any were painted. I never saw people appear to be so delighted with life, and so thoroughly alive, as if the glorious sea air were frothing in their veins, like champagne.

In the Park you don't see people laughing and talking to each other in carriages. They simply lean back on the cushions with an expression that seems to say, "This is the only thing I can think of to do, so I'm doing it just to kill time." Probably they don't really feel like that, but they look it. And as for the people who sit and watch, or stand and wait, they've usually a strained expression in their eyes, as if they were afraid of missing somebody or something of importance.

But here in Bellevue Avenue everybody was smiling and chatting; and I noticed that the men weren't so preternaturally alert as the men in New York. Some had actually taken time to get fat, which, so far I'd had reason to suppose, was a thing that never happened to American men.

And somehow the young girls had the air of being a great deal more important than we are at home. You could tell from the very way they sat and held up their heads in the motor cars and dog carts and other things, that they thought the world was theirs, and they were *the* people to know in it. One was driving a tandem, and she didn't look more than seventeen. I was glad when she bowed to Mrs. Ess Kay, because she was pretty and I made up my mind that I should like to know her.

"That's Cora Pitchley's step-daughter, Carolyn," said Mrs. Ess Kay. "Do you remember Margaret Taylour telling anecdotes of Cora? She doesn't bother much with the girl. People are talking about them both rather a lot this year, they say."

"Carolyn," I repeated. "What a pretty name, and how American-sounding, somehow. Fancy her driving tandem, with only that tiny groom if anything should happen. She must be plucky. How old is she?"

"Eighteen. She was one of last October's buds."

"October's buds," I repeated. "It sounds poetical—but unseasonable."

Potter answered with a laugh.

"Yes, we like things out of season in America, so we bring out most of our buds in October. Then they have the whole winter to bloom in, you know, before they're grafted on another stalk."

"Here comes Cora herself, now, in Tom Doremus's Electra," said Mrs. Ess Kay. "It must make Mrs. Vander Windt wild, his going so much with the Pitchley lot, as she can't stand them, and would keep Cora and Carolyn out of everything in Newport if she could."

I didn't wonder at Mr. Doremus, though, as I bowed to him and found time to know exactly how Mrs. Pitchley looked and what she wore, in the half second before our two motors flashed apart. I thought her splendidly handsome, and I liked the gleam in her dark grey eyes, which promised fun. But just then our chauffeur slowed down before a house which seemed to cover about a quarter of a mile of ground.

"Welcome to my little cottage, dear Betty," said Mrs. Ess Kay.

If this is her idea of a cottage, I don't know what her conception of a castle must be! And yet, when you come to analyse it, there really is something about the place which suggests a kind of glorified, Titanic cottage, rather too grand for a king, unless he were a fairy king, but possibly suited to an Emperor. But I do believe rich Americans think that what is good enough for a king is only

just good enough for them at a pinch;—and I've heard Mrs. Ess Kay call Windsor dreadfully shabby.

Her "cottage" looks as it were built of grey satinwood, but it is really shingles; and shingles can be the loveliest material imaginable, it seems, for the covering of a house, especially with a foundation of granite sparkling with mica. They are soft and shimmery in their tints, these shingles, as a dove's breast; some are dark, some light, but all are feathery in effect; and altogether The Moorings, with its gables, and porches, and bow windows, and balconies and wide verandahs, gives the effect of a huge, ruffy and motherly grey bird with her wings spread wide to shelter her birdlings.

I felt quite content to be one of the birdlings as I went in. I am sorry to say I'm not a bit fonder of Mrs. Ess Kay than I was in the ship; but the "cottage" looked so hospitable and jolly, and the air and the sunshine sparkled so, that I couldn't help feeling that it was pleasant to be young, and alive, and on the threshold of amusing new adventures. I was happy, and I would have liked to sing. I wanted to be very good friends with everybody, including Potter; and I fell in love with the house, the minute I set foot on the front verandah.

The great gorgeous palace in New York is far grander, of course, and must have cost four or five times as much; still, only very rich people could have built and furnished The Moorings, or afford to live in it.

There is a big square hall, not to be compared to ours at Battlemead, of course, though the Persian rugs and the pictures are fine; but the staircase is peculiarly charming. It looks a staircase made for sitting out dances with men you like, and evidently it knows its value as a flirting place and lives up to it, for there are fat, bright-coloured silk and satin cushions resting invitingly against the wall, on

152 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

each one of the shallow steps. Most of the rooms are enormous, and consist half of quaint leaded windows, with seats underneath. But better than anything else is the verandah, which runs all round the house, and is not only as wide as a good-sized room, but is fitted up like a succession of rooms. The delicate bead curtains that glitter like a rain of green and white and rose-coloured jewels give you a feeling of privacy, for you can see through them without being seen. The satiny grey floor is half covered with exquisite rugs; and everywhere there are Oriental tables and chairs, and cushiony sofas and green hammocks with frilly pink pillows, and screens, and bowers of palms and bright azaleas. I should like to live on that verandah swinging slowly in a hammock, and looking through the cascade of glittering beads at the sea and sky. I spoke this thought out aloud, but Potter said I would soon learn that there wasn't much time in Newport for looking at the sea and sky.

"Why, isn't that partly what you come to Newport for?" I asked.

They all laughed. "You just wait and find out," answered Potter. "And we'll work you pretty hard doing it."

Mrs. Ess Kay and Sally took me up to show me my room and theirs, and Potter said that he would go round and look in at the Casino, but he would come back and have tea with us, as soon as he had seen "what there was doing."

Each bedroom is done in a colour, and mine is the "white room." It was almost too heavy-sweet with some powerful flower fragrance, when we went in. For an instant I could not think what it was; but in another moment I had seen on tables and cabinets and window shelves, great bowls of water lilies, rising out of their dark leaves like moons out of cloud banks.

"From Potter," said Mrs. Ess Kay. "He telegraphed for them to be here, and sent word to the servants just how he wanted them arranged. I must say he does think of rather pretty things when he cares to please. And he *does* care to please you, Betty. But you know that without my telling you, don't you, my Lady Witch?"

It was hard-hearted of me, but all my pleasure in the gleaming white beauties went out, like a bursting bubble. It gets on my nerves to be grateful to Potter three or four times a day!

Nevertheless, when he came back (which he did after we had dressed, and were having tea behind the rain of glittering glass) I had to thank him prettily. He was pleased, but was evidently thinking about something else.

"I didn't get to the Casino, after all," said he. "I met Mrs. Pitchley going out to make a call (she was on her way home, it seems, when we met her) and she offered to turn back if I'd go with her, so I did."

"Now, see here, Potter Parker," broke in Mrs. Ess Kay, "I don't wish you to set up as another of Cora Pitchley's champions. It's all very well for Margaret Taylour to be forever quoting her; and she *is* fun, but she goes around being original in the wrong way, that nobody admires. That is, she does what she wants and not what other people want her to do. Margaret spends her summers at Blue Bay, and I spend mine at Newport, and I'm not going to have Mrs. Van der Windt down on me, or on my brother, either, if I can help it."

"Thanks for good advice," replied Potter airily. "But may be, when you hear what Mrs. Pitchley had to say to me, you'll change your tune."

Mrs. Ess Kay raised her eyebrows, but her eyes would look curious. "What could Cora Pitchley say that would have any particular effect on me?" she asked.

154 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

"She knows for a fact that she isn't to be asked to the Pink Ball on the twenty-third, and that Mrs. Van der Windt herself scratched your name off the list before she sailed for Europe."

Mrs. Ess Kay's face went a dull, ugly red, and she laughed a loud laugh which sounded as if it would be the same colour. "As for Cora, I can *quite* understand; but I don't believe the woman would have dared to try to exclude *me*," she said in a quivery voice.

"Why shouldn't she have dared, when you come to think of it?"

"Well, anyhow—she don't dare *now*."

"No, naturally, she won't dare now. You're as smart as they make 'em, Kath."

Then, for some reason, they both turned and gazed at me with a "thank-goodness-here's-a-floating-spar" sort of look, while Sally examined the grounds in her tea-cup, with that funny little three-cornered smile of hers.

"Was that the thing you thought would change me toward Cora Pitchley?" asked Mrs. Ess Kay.

"Yes, I thought it would give you a sort of fellow feeling."

"It doesn't," said she, shortly, "and nobody but a man could have thought it would. It makes me feel all the more that I don't want to be mixed up with her, for—for Betty's sake."

Potter whistled, with one thumb in a breast pocket. "For the che-ild's sake," he remarked dramatically; and Mrs. Ess Kay looked angry.

"I shan't invite the Pitchleys to my big affair," said she; "the affair I'm going to have for Betty."

"Oh, but you must please not put yourself out for me!" I exclaimed. "I should be so sorry to have you do that."

Potter laughed "Don't you try to rob her of her dearest triumph, Lady Daisy. You're the big gem for the middle of the setting. You're the Kohinoor."

"Potter! You ought to be ashamed of yourself, talking to her like that," said Mrs. Ess Kay. "But all he means, Betty, is that I shall be very glad to do anything I can to make your visit pleasant; and it will be no trouble at all for me to give an entertainment, you may be quite sure."

She said this as the Queen might say that it didn't matter to her whether there were seventy-five people or seventy-six asked to a garden party; and I realised that I was snubbed; so I said no more.

IX

ABOUT BATHING, A DRESS, AND AN EARL

MRS. ESS KAY had a headache next morning, and stopped in bed. She couldn't speak or be spoken to, and so we couldn't possibly ask her advice about going to Bailey's Beach for a dip in the sea. Potter—whose proposal it was—said that this was perhaps Providential, as she was almost certain to want me to stay in till I could be taken out officially. "But you don't need to know that," he added.

I looked at Sally, and she laughed; so I knew that I was to go.

"Oh, but what about bathing clothes!" I exclaimed, on a sudden thought. "How stupid of me not to have remembered that I would want them, before I left home, or in New York!"

"I reckon it would have been stupid of us if we hadn't remembered," said Sally. Then she went on,—irrelevantly, it seemed at first: "What day of the month is to-morrow?"

"The twenty-ninth of July," said Potter, promptly, while I was resigning myself, after a slight struggle, to the fact that I had lost track of dates.

"Seem's to me that's somebody's birthday, isn't it?" Sally appeared to address her remark to the ceiling.

"How *did* you know?" I exclaimed.

"A little bird told me; the kind that builds in birthday books. It lives on a table in Lady Victoria's 'den'."

"Fancy your keeping the date in your head all this time!"

"I've a weakness for remembering birthdays—when I'm fond of the people who own them. You see, everybody thinks about Christmas, and I don't want to be confused with everybody, in the minds of just those special people. Now, the truth is, I've got a little birthday present upstairs, which I didn't mean you should see until tomorrow, but as part of it may come in rather handy this morning, perhaps we might run up and have a look at it."

"Oh, Sally, you dear!" I exclaimed.

"Oh, Sally, you wretch, to have kept that birthday to yourself; I want to be on in this act," grumbled Potter. But I hardly heard him, I was so excited about what I was going to find upstairs.

We went to my room, Sally and I; and she rang for Louise, who was told to fetch from what Sally called her "closet" a certain black "trunk" of whose existence Louise was evidently already aware.

It was a good-sized box, big enough to hold two or three dresses; and when it was opened by Sally after Louise had gone, it proved to contain three and a half.

One of the three was a blue gauze ball gown, embroidered with patterns of thistles in tiny sparkling things that looked like diamonds; the second was pink tulle, with garlands of tiny roses; the third was a white linen, made as only Americans know how to make up linens, and the half was—well, I was not quite sure what it was at first, though I could see that it was pretty. It was pale green and there were two parts of it. The bigger of the two (it was not very big) was of soft silk, and extremely fluffy. It had a low-necked and short-sleeved bodice, and attached to that was a skirt—or something that would have been a skirt if it had had more time to grow. The second part

158 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

was silk, too, but more difficult to describe. Perhaps I'd do best to say that it was like long stockings, only it was in one piece and evidently meant to fasten round the waist.

"There's also a pair of sandals and a really sweet cap, deah," Sally explained.

"Is it a fancy dress for a little girl?" I asked puzzled.

"For a little girl about your size. Why, you funny child, it's your *bathing* dress. I had to get it and all the other things ready made, for there wasn't time for anything more than having them altered to your measurement if they were to be ready for your birthday."

"Oh, Sally, are they *all* for me?"

"Well, they're for nobody else. It's *your* birthday."

Of course I told her she was an angel, and so she was, quite an exceptional kind of an angel; and I kissed her, and was saying a great many things, when she stopped me. "So glad you like them, deah. But now we must be moving if we're to have our bath this morning. Louise can't leave Katherine, but we'll have one of the other maids come with our things. It's getting late."

I felt frightfully. "It *is* late, isn't it?" said I, hopefully, looking at my watch. "Perhaps it's too late to go this morning, after all."

"Not a bit of it," said Sally. "Come along."

"I'm not sure but that I'd better stop in, if Mr. Parker thinks Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox would want me to," I floundered on.

"She won't mind—not much, anyway, if we don't take you to the Casino without her." Sally tried to reassure me. But her eyes had begun to twinkle.

"Don't you think she might? There are a lot of letters I ought——"

"Now child, out with it. Don't you like the bathing dress?"

"Oh, I *admire* it immensely," I stammered. "It's like a—*a picture*. But—I can't see myself wearing it. That is, I can't bear to think of anyone else seeing me wear it."

Sally went off into a fit of musical Southern laughter. "You poor baby. I forgot the shock it might be to you, if you're accustomed only to English bathing clothes. They certainly are the *limit*! Have you never been to Trouville or Ostend?"

I shook my head, sad at having to seem ungrateful. But how could I help it?

"Well, they have this kind there, and so they do here. Everybody has it. My prettiest one is much like yours, only it's poppy-coloured. Katherine's is cornflower blue this year, and she's got a black one and a lilac one. When you see all the others prancing about in the same sort of things, you won't feel a bit funny."

I was far from sure that I should attain to such a peaceful state of mind as not to "feel funny"; but Sally had called me a baby, and I had to redeem myself from that aspersion at any price. So I tried to compose my countenance over a beating heart, and think about other things on the way to the beach, as you do if you are going to the dentist's.

Potter went with us, though I supposed that when we came to the end, he would bid us good-bye, and trot off to the place where the men bathed, wherever that might be. Our things had been taken on ahead by a servant or two, and we walked, as the day was perfect, and I was thankful to get a little exercise.

We met a great many people whom Sally and Potter knew, and just as Potter had said. "Here we are at Bailey's Beach," that handsome Mrs. Pitchley and her stepdaughter, with Mr. Doremus came up. They called to us, so we stopped to speak, and I was pleased because I'd been

160 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

wanting to know them. We were introduced, and I was wondering what Mrs. Ess Kay would do if she could see us chatting with the Pitchleys in sight of all Newport, when a little thin man, looking perfectly furious, with a striped bathing suit rolled up under his arm, came hopping along towards us, as if he were a cricket ball that somebody had batted off the beach.

His panama hat was on the back of his head; his single eyeglass on its chain was flying out behind him in the breeze, and my first thought was how comical he looked. My second, as he came nearer, was something quite different.

"Why, Mohunsleigh!" I cried.

He stopped hopping so abruptly that he stumbled, and nearly fell down.

"Hullo, Betty," he growled, hauling off his hat as if he hated the bother of doing it. "Where did you spring from?"

"Home. Where on earth did you spring from?" I echoed.

"They've sprung me off their beastly beach," said he, glaring, and sticking in his eyeglass. Then he almost waved his hideous little bathing suit at me. "Wouldn't let me bathe, the bounders."

"Wouldn't let you bathe?"

"No. Said, 'You can't get in here. *This* beach is for millionaires.' I'm blest if I don't shake the sand off my feet as soon as I can pack up and get out."

"No, no, don't do that," I begged. "There's some mistake, perhaps."

"No, there isn't," said he. "I'm not a millionaire; but I did think I looked as if I could afford a bathe."

"Sally dear, do let me introduce my cousin, Lord Mohunsleigh," I said in a great hurry.

Potter opened his eyes at the thin little man, and Mrs. and Miss Pitchley looked at him with interest.

"Do introduce us all," laughed Mrs. Pitchley, "and then we can sympathise with Lord—Lord—oh, but I *can never* learn to pronounce him."

I introduced him to the mother and stepdaughter then, though I hadn't thought of its being necessary, and explained that my cousin, though spelled very elaborately, was pronounced Moonslee.

He had evidently abandoned all intention of immediate flight now, and his rage was visibly cooling. He was looking at Mrs. Pitchley with quite as much interest as she showed in him, and with even more at the girl, although he talked to Potter Parker, and answered his questions quite civilly. He explained that he had actually been ordered away from the beach, bathing suit and all, by some "impertinent ass of an official."

Potter was hospitably distressed, but Mrs. Pitchley was moved to laughter.

"Ha, ha, won't the man be sick when he sees you coming back with us, and hears us call you Lord Mohunsleigh?—for if you'll point him out in time, that's what I *shall* call you, right under his nose. You see, this is a private beach. We all subscribe for our bath houses; but you'll be our guest, of course, and I'll put Mr. Pitchley's box at your service. He's gone off fishing for a few days. Only to think of the Earl of Mohunsleigh being turned back. Delicious!"

"Can't say I thought of it that way till now," said Mohunsleigh, pulling his wiry moustache, and condescending to grin slightly at last. "But it's true, I'm *not* a millionaire, you know."

"You're an earl, you can't say you're not, for I read in *The Flashlight* only the other day that the Earl of

Mohunsleigh had sailed for America, though it couldn't be ascertained on what ship."

"Didn't know there was any particular reason why it should be ascertained," said Mohunsleigh. "I've run over, to visit a chap in California,—dashed nice chap, too, but thought I'd have a shot at New York first, and blest if I could stand it; never could stand being grilled since a sunstroke I got when I was serving in India."

"Dear me, who and what does a lord serve?" broke in Miss Pitchley; which surprised Mohunsleigh and me both so much that he stared, and I blushed. But she didn't, though no girl under Vic's age at least would think of cutting in like that with a stranger, at home. Mohunsleigh was delighted to be spoken to by her, though, one could see. His eyes brightened up, and he smiled, looking straight at her, as if she were a new and absolutely desirable kind of rifle. I say rifle, because Mohunsleigh is a great shot, and would rather spend his money (what he has of it) on a new invention by way of a gun than anything else.

"Used to be in the army. I've chucked it now," he explained, affably, beginning to look quite nice. For really, though small and wiry, with ginger-coloured hair and moustache and no-coloured eyes, Mohunsleigh isn't an ugly man, when you come to notice his nice, sharp features. He's only a distant cousin of mine, and so old (he's nearly forty) that in the first years of our acquaintance he made himself agreeable by teaching me to ride on his foot; but I always liked him—whenever I remembered his existence. Naturally, though, this hasn't been often, as one of his many eccentricities is to be continually prowling at the ends of the earth—anywhere, where there may be animals to shoot. What kind, he doesn't seem to care, if they are only large enough. Once, he was fond of tigers; but the

last thing he had a fad for was polar bears, and he sent mother a skin, which makes the oak room smell strongly of camphor.

"I hope, anyhow, you're going to pay a good long visit to Newport," said Mrs. Pitchley.

"I meant to go back to-morrow morning," replied Mohunsleigh. "But perhaps I might stop on a bit longer."

"We'll give you some fun," volunteered Miss Pitchley, looking frightfully pretty.

"Will you?" said Mohunsleigh. "Jolly nice of you. I must think about it." Then he deigned to remember that I was his little long-lost cousin; asked when I'd arrived on this side the water, and a few other things; but he looked more at Miss Pitchley than at me. I suppose it is difficult to be much excited about a person who has taken riding lessons on your foot.

Potter asked Mohunsleigh where he was staying, and when he heard it was at an hotel he said his sister wouldn't allow that to go on. Lord Mohunsleigh would have to come to The Moorings, that was settled; and his man must be told to pack up his things directly. Mightn't word be sent by messenger at once?

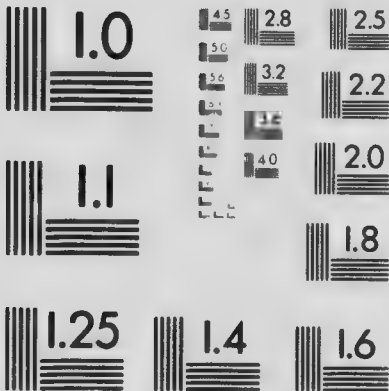
"Haven't brought a man, thanks awfully. Shed that habit long ago," said my cousin. "I've got precious little luggage, too; picked this thing up in a shop as I came along, and they charged me the deuce of a lot for it. You're awfully good, you know, and all that, to offer to put me up, but I only came prepared to spend a night or two."

Then Potter insisted, and blew all Mohunsleigh's objections away one by one, as if they had been threads of cobweb; still, my cousin wouldn't give a definite answer, perhaps not understanding American hospitality, or per-



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



APPLIED IMAGE Inc.

2453 East Main Street
Rochester, New York 14609 USA
Tel: 482-2300, Telex: 9800
(416) 288-5989 - Fax

haps having other ideas which he preferred. At all events, we went to the bathing machines (which weren't bathing machines at all, but dear little houses) without anything being decided. The only invitation which Mohunsleigh had really accepted was Mrs. Pitchley's, for her husband's bathing box.

She kept her word, and called him "Lord Mohunsleigh" in quite a high voice, just as we passed the man who had refused to let him go onto the beach before; but the man didn't seem impressed in the least. I think he didn't even recognise Mohunsleigh as the same person, or if he did, he pretended very cleverly not to.

I had forgotten the horror of the bathing dress in my surprise at meeting Mohunsleigh, but it fell over me again like a cloud, as soon as I was shut up in the bathing box with those wisps of green silk. I wouldn't have the maid help me, and wrestled with the ordeal alone. It took me some time; but when everything was on (there were only four things, counting the cap and smart little sandals) I couldn't say to myself that the effect wasn't attractive. It was; and I did approve of myself in the quaint head-dress, which was more like a fetching silk toque with an Alsatian bow in front, than a mere cap.

But the awful moment came when I was ready, with my hand on the door. I'm sure Joan of Arc must have felt like that when she had let her hair down, and put on that graceful white dress of hers one sees in the pictures, to be burned. She may have been dimly aware that she was looking quite her best, as I was; but even that couldn't have buoyed her up much at the moment, and it didn't me.

As I stood hesitating, somebody knocked. I peeped out, and it was Sally—quiet, unassuming little Sally, with her middle-aged airs—looking like one of Stan's Gaiety Girl photographs, in a short, low-necked dress of bright poppy.

colour, with silk legs as shiny as an Archdeacon's, only with quite a different effect.

"Come on, my green Undine," said she; and I came, because she pulled me so suddenly that otherwise I should have fallen flat on my nose.

Having seen her dressed so much in my style, it wasn't quite as bad as before; and when I was out of my box, — like one of those little barometer women that tell fair weather,—there was Mrs. Pitchley in crimson, and Carolyn Pitchley in white, and lots of pretty women, all with the same lovely stockings. There hadn't been any standing about when we arrived, because we were early, not having gone to the Casino first as the others had, and it was a relief to find them; or it was, until I had a great shock.

Instead of the men being away at a separate beach of their own, they were put with us, and kept popping out of boxes every minute, and running up to talk to the girls they knew, just as calmly as if they were in evening dress. My eyes almost came out of my head for an instant. Then I just swallowed hard, and leaped over about five centuries of prejudice as if I were jumping across a tiny beck.

"Everything's a matter of custom," said I to myself; and in another minute I was racing gaily down to the water, hand in hand with Sally, as if we had been little girls with sand pails and shovels.

I expected to feel as if I had plunged into a million-gallon bath of iced water, when I got out among the creamy breakers; but judging from the sensation, Americans have had their part of the Atlantic beautifully warmed from underneath, with some patent heating apparatus. It would be just like them!

The sandy beach is so level, you can patter out ever

so far, until you finally have to bob up and down for the rolling waves, as if they were Royalties—and so they are, for the Kingdom of Mer. I can swim a little, and Potter took me beyond the breakers. It was great fun, under that arch of turquoise sky, with the sun dancing on the clear green water, as if the millionaires of Newport had been sprinkling gold pieces. But the best of all was the floating platform, about a hundred yards from the beach, where we sat and let the emeralds and pearls that the Princesses of Mer threw, spray over us.

At home, when you are at the sea, your governess or some other person who thinks enjoyment ought to be measured off by rule, sits on the shore looking at her watch; and when you have been in exactly twenty minutes she tells you to come out directly, or you will catch a chill. I've always wondered what it would do to you if you stopped in for twenty-one minutes, though I never had the chance to try; but in America all that is quite different, as different as the very way they say "seaside," with their accent on the first instead of the last syllable.

Nobody thinks about watches. You just bathe and bathe as long as you feel like it. When you are tired of it you come out; then you bake yourself in the sand for a little while if you like, and run back to begin over again. It is heavenly. No other adjective half expresses it.

When we did really make up our minds to stop out for good, and had dressed ourselves, feeling like goddesses just born of the foam (or gods, as the case might be), we all met—our party, the Pitchleys and my cousin,—to arrange about what Mohunsleigh would do.

It seemed that Mrs. Pitchley had invited him to lunch, and as she had been so kind about the bathhouse, he explained to Potter, he thought that he couldn't very well refuse. About stopping on, he would decide later; but he

consented to drive with us in the afternoon, in a motor car of Potter's that holds six. By that time, he would have had time to send a wire to a friend of his in New York, and to make up his mind what he had better do about going back.

When we got home, we found Mrs. Ess Kay much better, and up. She was inclined at first to be cross with Sally and Potter for taking me to the beach; but when she heard about Mohunsleigh, she forgot to be vexed, and seemed almost excited about him, I can't think why.

She asked lots of questions, very quickly, one after the other, brightening up when Potter told how he had invited Mohunsleigh to come to The Moorings, but looking quite strained and wild at the news about his lunching with the Pitchleys.

"You *oughtn't* to have let him go, Potter," she said.

Potter shrugged his shoulders—those square American shoulders of his. "Strange as it may seem to you, he wanted to. That settled it. I didn't monkey with the gunpowder."

Mrs. Ess Kay's lips went down at the corners, and her eyes flashed.

"How easy it is to see that woman's game," said she. "Cora Pitchley knows that Mrs. Van der Windt and the committee will be only too anxious for us to go to the Pink Ball *now*, and she thinks she sees a way of getting there too, after all. Mark my words, she's got her Earl; it'll go hard with her if she doesn't *stick* to him. Betty, can't you do something? He's your cousin. You've a right to him."

"I don't know that I want him particularly," I confessed. "Mohunsleigh's a dear, queer old thing, and I'm fond of him; but we haven't seen much of him at home, for years. And I know he can't be bothered with me."

"Anyhow, he certainly ought to be here," said Mrs. Ess Kay, anxiously; "it will be perfectly loathsome if we have to sit still and see the Pitchley's gobble him up."

"Poor Mohunsleigh!" I exclaimed. "Why, what will they *do* with him?" And for a lurid instant I beheld Miss Pitchley and Carolyn as beautiful ogresses, with their lips red—too red.

"They'll go to the Pink Ball with him, and by him. They couldn't without him. That's what they'll *do*," said Mrs. Ess Kay, as if she saw my cousin's whitening bones picked clean by the Pitchley family. "And we shall have to be intimate with them, the whole time he stays."

"Oh, you needn't feel bound to for my sake. It isn't as though Mohunsleigh——" I began; but Mrs. Ess Kay snapped my poor sentence in two, as if it had been cotton on a reel.

"I have to think for all of us," said she; "Cora Pitchley is a climber."

We changed our dresses (Sally says one must be forever changing one's dress at Newport), lunched; and then at the door appeared a gorgeous white motor car lined with scarlet, which I had never seen before. As we all had on white, from head to foot, we matched it beautifully; and feeling that we looked nice enough even to grace an accident, if it *must* come, we started to pick up Carolyn Pitchley and my cousin.

Mrs. Ess Kay didn't go, for she wasn't quite herself yet; and besides, she perhaps thought that in the circumstances Mohunsleigh ought to be brought to call before she met him informally. I don't know that any of us were as sorry as we ought to have been not to have her.

The Pitchleys' house, which is called the Château de Plaisance, is on a much grander scale than The Moorings. It thinks it is an old French Château, and tries to convey

the same impression to beholders, as do several others of more or less the same sort. But it's a hopeless effort. The poor dears might as well give up and resign themselves once for all to being a blot on the exquisite blue and gold landscape; though perhaps if they can hold out for two or three hundred years, they may do better. The farther we went, along a glorious road called the Cliff Drive, and the more charming Colonial houses and delightful "cottages" I saw, the more I felt that the regular palaces were mistakes, with Newport for a setting and the sea for a background. I am glad that I didn't live at the time when all the real castles of the world were young and awkward. Perhaps they looked just as crude as these, at first, though it's hard to imagine it.

When we went back, the first thing that Mrs. Ess Kay asked, was: "Well, what about Lord Mohunsleigh?"

"He's made up his mind to stop, and send for his things," said I.

"You gave him my note? He's coming to us?"

"I gave him the note, and he's coming round presently to thank you for being so kind. But—he feels he had better stay with the Pitchleys. You see, it's like this. They happen to be sending a servant to New York to-day, to do some commissions for Mrs. Pitchley, so the man will go to Mohunsleigh's hotel too. And as they're doing so much for him, and Mrs. Pitchley and her husband know some friends of his at Home, he thinks—But he'll tell you all about it himself."

"I told you so!" said Mrs. Ess Kay.

X

ABOUT A VIOLET TEA AND A MILLIONAIRE

WHILE we were motoring, Mrs. Ess Kay had been terribly busy with her secretary, getting invitations ready for a Violet Tea.

She was giving the Tea, she explained, to introduce me to Newport Society, and she was having a Violet one because it was not the right time of year for violets.

I meekly suggested that as a reason for giving some other kind of Tea, but she said not at all. She wished to have that kind because violets were hard to get, though not impossible. I would see when the time came that she could get them. And I should also see, if it were indeed true that I did not know, what a Violet Tea was. She wanted it to be a surprise for me; she thought I would like it.

I hadn't long to wait before learning the true inwardness of a Violet Tea, for Mrs. Ess Kay was determined to get me "out" as soon as possible; and it seems that in America the time to bring a girl out is at a tea. At least, that is one way; and as Mrs. Ess Kay was even then planning to give something very big just before the much talked about "Pink Ball," so as to "take the shine off that grand affair," she wished to get the teacups washed up before she sent out the next invitations.

I'm sure Mother wouldn't take as much trouble for a house party to meet the King and Queen, as Mrs. Ess Kay did for that Violet Tea; and I daren't think even now—

though it happened weeks ago—of the money she must have spent.

For one thing, she and Sally and I had to have violet dresses. She would buy mine (I don't see how I should have done it, if she hadn't, especially as Vic wrote just then that Mother felt poorer than ever, and That Man hadn't yet proposed), and it was beautiful; pale violet silk muslin, trimmed with violets and their leaves. Then violet and silver livery was ordered in a great hurry for the four footmen—to be worn on one afternoon, and no more! But these things were mere sketchy details, compared to other preparations.

One room, where tea was to be served, was entirely draped with violet silk, from the palest to the darkest shades; and for the smaller of the two drawing-rooms—the one where Mrs. Kay would stand to receive her guests—wire frames were made, from measurements, to fit and cover all four walls. I couldn't imagine what these frames were for, at first, but when their hour came, they were padded with moss and covered with fresh violets. The curtains were taken down from the windows, and a network of violets was hung up in their place, with an effect of great loveliness when the light streamed through the screen of flowers. And even this was not all, for a soft thick mat of grass and moss was spread over the polished floor, with a sprinkling of violets. All the furniture was taken away, and instead, along the walls, were placed banks of artificial moss and violets. No doubt these would have been real, too, but when crushed, they would have stained the dresses of those that sat upon them. Altogether, the room was turned into a woodsy bower of violets; and I was given a great bunch of the dear flowers to carry.

There had been only a week in which to prepare these sensational effects, but everything was finished in time, and

172 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

without flurry. Already I knew a great many of Mrs. Ess Kay's friends; and on the day of the tea it seemed that each person whose acquaintance I had made had remembered me with a cartwheel of violets. All my flowers were placed in vases on tables in the big drawing-room, adjoining the bower of violets; and as a card was attached to each bunch, pinned on the masses of violet satin ribbon which trailed from it, each giver could have the pleasure of seeing how his gift compared with his neighbour's. It was a wonderful display—a violet show. And, as Mrs. Ess Kay had said, "it was not the right time of the year for violets."

We stood on our feet for hours, smiled yards of smiles, and said the same things over and over again so many times, that I began to feel like a phonograph doll which I saw in my first New York shop. Only, when I ran down nobody wound me up, and I had to go on by myself as best I could, which was fatiguing, and made the machinery squeak.

But everybody said it was a huge success. The New York papers had each more than a column about the "function," as they called it, and Mrs. Ess Kay was piously happy.

I had thought we were very gay before; but after the Violet Tea, from getting up to going to bed, we never had a moment that hadn't its own appointed place in the procession of hours, like a bead in a long rosary.

After breakfast, we went to the Casino, to play tennis, listen to the concert, or pretend to, and to gabble. There, we would meet everybody we knew; and it was odd to see the calm, but slightly conscious air of superiority with which the Everybodies, going in or out, passed the poor nobodies assembled to watch the Casino entrance. Just as the middle and lower class people stand till they are ready to drop, only to see the Queen drive into the Park, or leave

Buckingham Palace dreadfully bored, to open a bridge, so these Americans jostle each other to see their millionaires and especially millionairesses, going to enjoy themselves. Fancy if Londoners reduced themselves to a state of collapse for the pleasure of seeing Mr. Beit take off his hat to Mrs. Wertheimer! But the millionaires in America seem to be like our aristocracy, only more important, for the nonmillionaires take a great deal more trouble to stare at them than the common people do at us.

After the Casino, there was always the beach, and the most delightful things happened at the beach. It was never twice the same. Then, we would lunch with some one, or some one would lunch with us at The Moorings. Afterwards there would be a drive, calls to make, perhaps two or three wonderful "At Homes," or concerts, with great singers and entertainers from New York; twenty minutes' rest, and then a scramble to dress for dinner, with a "dinner dance" to follow, or amateur theatricals.

Of course, as I haven't been presented yet, and don't know anything about what the Season is like in Town, except what Vic has told me, I can't judge of the differences at first hand; but then, Vic has told me a lot, and I have heard Stan and Loveland talk; besides, one seems to know one's own country and country people by instinct without having actually to see what they do; and I'm sure that even in the smartest set at home they don't dream of bothering their heads to think of such original entertainments as in America.

In England there are just two or three kinds of parties. You give a crush, which is grand if you have a big house, or you ask a few bright, particular ones and enjoy yourself. Or in the country you have a house party, and pick out the men because they can shoot and the women because they are pretty, or else, if it's winter, you hunt and you

have theatricals. But the Americans at Newport turn up their noses at that slow, old-fashioned kind of thing. They lie awake nights (I'm sure they must) to think of something so original that nobody else can ever have had anything the least like it before. It is better, too, to have it very sensational and startling. If you are invited to a party, you never know a bit what it will be like; whether you will dance in a barn, and eat your supper on horse-back out of decorated mangers; whether there will be captive balloons at a garden party; whether a Noah's Ark will have been rigged up on a miniature lake, or whether you will have a pair of skates provided for you and find yourself cutting figures on the ice in a gorgeously illuminated skating-rink, with the thermometer up to goodness knows how many degrees outside.

Of course, in a place where everybody gets nervous prostration trying to outdo everybody else in originality and extravagance, it wouldn't be like Mrs. Ess Kay to let herself fall behind.

She simply made up her mind that her big entertainment should be *the* affair of the season, before she decided what form it should take. She thought instead of sleeping, for several nights, and began to wear the expression on her face which I have in motor cars when I think we are going to telescope with something twice our size, and am trying to prepare for eternity with a pleasant smile on my lips. She ate scarcely anything, telephoned a good deal, and took phenacetin in hot milk. Then, suddenly, it came to her;—I mean the Idea.

We were at lunch when she thought of it, and luckily there were no visitors except Mrs. Pitchley and Carolyn, Mohunsleigh, and Tom Doremus. It was bad enough even with them, for she half sprang up, then sat down again, first going red, then going pale; and we all thought she

was getting ready to faint. But as soon as she could speak, she said, when we shrieked at her, "It's nothing—nothing. I've just thought of something, that's all."

Afterwards, when she and Sally and Potter and I were alone together, she told us that at last she had got the right inspiration for her big entertainment.

It was two days after the Violet Tea, so it was quite time she should get it, she said; and she had been dreadfully worried, because the invitations ought to go out almost at once. The famous Pink Ball at the Casino was for the 23d, and she wanted to have her party the night before, so that everybody would be worn out, and the ball would fall flat.

"But we've got our cards all right now," said Potter. "Why do you want to queer the show?"

"I intend to show Mrs. Van der Windt what I can do," she answered.

"Suppose a lot of the people you want refuse you, so that they can be fresh for the ball?" Sally suggested.

"They won't," said Mrs. Ess Kay, "when they have seen what I shall say on the invitations."

Then she got up, went to her desk, took out some engraved cards which she had ready, all but filling in the date, and wrote something in one corner. "What do you think of that?" she asked Sally.

Sally took the card, looked at it for a minute, laughed, and passed it on to me, while Potter came and stared over my shoulder.

She had written across the card: "Fancy Dress, with Masks. A Visit to the Maze; and Aladdin's Cave."

"Do you think that will bring them?" she enquired, with a triumphant and mysterious air.

"I think it will," said Sally.

"You know your business, old girl," remarked Potter.

176 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

"They'll want to know what it means, and they'll be bound to come and find out. What *is* your idea, anyway?"

"I'll tell you another time," said Mrs. Ess Kay. "I should like it to be a surprise for Betty, just as it will be for people outside. She'll enjoy it more."

I didn't tease to know the secret, though I was really curious, especially about Aladdin's Cave, which seemed to promise something gorgeous. The mystery was religiously kept; but there was plenty of excitement in sending out the invitations.

There were endless discussions between Mrs. Ess Kay and Potter, and though she seemed so angry with Mrs. Van der Windt and several other members of the Ball committee, for trying to make a stand against her, she was perfectly ruthless about the names she would scratch off the lists her secretary was continually making out and revising for her.

I heard her say that she wouldn't have dreamed of asking the Pitchleys, if they hadn't "got hold of" Mohunsleigh; and that Cora Pitchley, whatever else she might be, was the cleverest woman in Newport, to have scooped in all the honours. Though to this day I can't see exactly what she meant, for she never would explain.

Anyhow, whatever the superlatively clever thing was that Mrs. Pitchley had done, there was no longer a question of her being kept out from the Pink Ball, or anything else. People were charming to her, and we met Mrs. Van der Windt herself at the Chateau at a luncheon party with a vaudeville entertainment afterwards, and also at a dinner. Mrs. Van der Windt seemed to like my cousin, Mohunsleigh, very much, too, and gave a moonlight motor car picnic especially for him, with only a few people asked besides ourselves, and the Pitchleys and Tom Doremus.

Mohunsleigh had not expected to stay more than a few

days; but when he found that the friend he wanted to visit in California was detained in New York on business, and Mrs. Pitchley and everybody urged him very much to stop, he decided that he would. I didn't suppose that Mohunsleigh would care for frivolities, after all the years he has spent tramping about in strange countries, killing things; but he appeared to be perfectly happy and nothing bored him, so long as the Pitchleys were there.

When Mrs. Ess Kay was making out the list of invitations for the great Blow Out, as Potter called it, Mohunsleigh happened to stroll over to The Moorings alone. He came to tell us that he had made up his mind to stay, and why.

"You see," he exclaimed, "I hadn't an invitation for any special time, from Harborough. It was a sort of standing thing, given when we met in Damascus last winter. I was to come when I could, and be always welcome; that sort of thing, don't you know. I cabled the day I sailed, and didn't get any answer, but I hadn't been in New York two hours when I'm blessed if the beggar didn't walk in on me at the Waldorf. Jolly glad to see me, and all that, but had to hang on in New York for a bit, on some business or other. Now he thinks he can't get off for a fortnight or so, and as what he's got on isn't my sort of racket, I might as well be here as anywhere else, perhaps a little better."

"What Harborough is your friend?" enquired Mrs. Ess Kay, with interest. "The new San Francisco millionaire?"

"Don't know how new he is," said Mohunsleigh, "or even whether he's a millionaire, for it's the sort of thing one doesn't ask a chap. But if he isn't a millionaire he can spend money like one, for I've seen him do it. A deuce of a good fellow he is; don't know a better anywhere."

178 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

"It's Jameson B. Harborough, isn't it?" asked Sally; and I was quite surprised to hear her ask the question, for she never seems to take any interest in a man just because he is a millionaire, as so many of the other people I meet do.

"Yes, those are his initials," said Mohunsleigh, looking bored.

"Then it is the millionaire, Katherine," went on Sally, quite eagerly. "Don't you think, as he's said to be such an interesting, original sort of person, and such a friend of Lord Mohunsleigh's, besides, that it would be nice if you gave Lord Mohunsleigh a card to send him, for your party on the 22d?"

"Why, yes, that's a very good idea of yours, Sally," exclaimed Mrs. Ess Kay. "I shall be delighted. I'll give you the card now, Lord Mohunsleigh, if you don't mind."

Lord Mohunsleigh said that he would be very pleased, but he couldn't tell at all whether his friend went in for that sort of thing—had an idea he didn't, and rather fought shy of society shows, though, of course, Harborough was a gentleman, and all that.

"Anyhow, you send him the card, and write him a line saying we should like to meet him," persisted Mrs. Ess Kay.

Accordingly, Mohunsleigh slipped the card in its crested envelope into his pocket, and we heard nothing more of it for a while. Then, when I at least had forgotten the conversation, in the wild rush for pleasure in which we lived, he said one day to Mrs. Ess Kay and Sally that his friend would be so much obliged if the invitation might be kept open. Harborough couldn't be sure until the last moment whether he could come or not, but would be delighted to do so, if he might be allowed to decide at the last moment.

All Newport was soon talking about Mrs. Ess Kay's mysterious fancy dress party, which wasn't exactly a ball, but was—nobody knew what. People wondered about the Maze and Aladdin's Cave; and those who were asked were sure they would be something to be remembered and talked of through coming seasons; while those who were not, were equally certain that the great mysteries would turn out to be stupid and childish. The Pink Ball, which had been the one absorbing topic of conversation till Mrs. Ess Kay's invitations appeared, became a matter of secondary interest, and Mrs. Ess Kay and Mrs. Pitchley both began thus early to be avenged.

Potter surprised me one morning with the design of a fancy dress, which he announced that he'd been inspired in the night to sketch for my benefit. According to him, I was to represent the Frost Sprite, in glittering white garments, with a long veil like a trail of sparkling mist. I thought it rather suggestive of a diamond-dusted Christmas card, but Mrs. Ess Kay was so charmed with the idea that she begged me to have it. "Potter will be broken-hearted if you don't, and besides, it will cost you next to nothing," she said.

It was the latter consideration rather more than the first which decided me to give my gracious consent. Mrs. Ess Kay telegraphed to a *costumier*, who was also an artist. He came, made a few practical alterations in Potter's design, and arranged costumes for Mrs. Ess Kay and Sally. Afterwards, when my bill came in, which it didn't do till I asked for it, it certainly was ridiculously small, a mere nothing even for me; but I couldn't help having some uncomfortable suspicions, and I have them still.

XI

ABOUT A GREAT AFFAIR

AND now I have come to the Great Affair.

It is the day after, and I have been scribbling down in a hurry all the things that happened to me in Newport meanwhile, for somehow most things have seemed to lead up to that.

I knew no more than anybody outside about the mystery of the Maze, and Aladdin's Cave. The secret was wonderfully kept, although there was a constant undertone of excitement running through the house for days beforehand, and an army of workmen were busy in "the grounds"—as everyone calls them—first putting up a gigantic marquee, and then working inside it. One man told Mrs. Ess Kay that he had been offered a hundred dollars by a New York newspaper to tell what was the nature of his work at The Moorings, but either the bribe wasn't enough, or else he was impeccable.

All under the house runs a great cellar. I knew this from the first, because one broiling hot day, soon after I came, Sally took me down to get cool after I had dressed for somebody's At Home, and looked like a freshly boiled lobster. It's a series of rooms, perfectly ventilated, with rough walls, and cemented floors. One of the rooms is of enormous size, and there are stone pillars dotted about here and there for supports. There is one other that is rather large, but the rest are small. One is used as if it were an ice house; there are others for wine; and there are some storerooms. For a week before the Great Affair men

were working down there all day, and towards the last far into the night. Big boxes and bales were lugged down stairs, and didn't come up again. Not a hint went round of what was going on, but I was sure that Aladdin's Cave was in mysterious process of manufacture.

There seemed quite a pressure on the atmosphere for days at The Moorings, except in Sally Woodburn's rooms, for I've noticed that she is never excited by social events. They seem of little real importance to her, I suppose, compared with the past which she has always in her thoughts. When I was with her I felt calmer; but with others, or when I was alone (which seldom happened for more than ten minutes at a stretch) I was as much excited as anybody. Partly it may have been the effect of climate, for the air in America certainly does make you feel always as if something wonderful was going to happen to you round the next corner; and partly it was the effect of Potter.

Potter was most disturbing—and is still, for that matter. He has the air of feeling that he and he alone has a right to me, and it's quite a lesson in tact keeping the peace between him and other men who feel it their Christian duty to be a little nice to a young foreigner.

But I am thinking now of the time before the Great Affair. It really was a strain wondering what it would be like, and whether it would be a grand success, or whether it would fall short of all the brilliant expectations, when the mystery should be revealed.

At last the night came. The invitations were for ten o'clock, and people could not resist the temptation to come soon after the hour, and begin. Mrs. Ess Kay stood in the Early English drawing-room (that's the style it's furnished in, or she believes it is) receiving without a mask, and dressed to represent Queen Margaret of Navarre, from whom she says that she is descended. She

182 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

had another dress to put on afterwards, so that none of the guests would recognise her, and she could have fun with the rest, but no one knew about that except Sally and Potter, and me.

We others didn't appear at first, because we had no costumes to change with, but by and by, when a lot of people had arrived, we mingled with them.

As soon as anyone came in, Mrs. Ess Kay would say, "How do you do, my Lord of Leicester, or my noble George Washington," or whatever the person might be trying to be. "So glad to see you. You must go and have a look at the Maze. Do you know how to find it? Just through that curtain. You can't miss the way."

Then the gorgeous masker would cross the hall, and disappear behind a great curtain of tapestry that covered an open doorway leading to the garden. But he hadn't to go out of doors. A canvas covered, winding passage took him to the vast marquee, which was, of course, the Maze. But why it was the Maze, and what happened to you in the Maze after you had got in, I didn't know any more than the outsiders. That was the fun of it for me, of course; and it really was fun.

Sally had only taken enough pains about her dress to save annoying Mrs. Ess Kay. She was a White Carmelite, with a veil over her face instead of a mask. But Potter had made a tremendous fuss about himself. He was Flame, which he said was appropriate in the circumstances, as he had got so used to playing Fire to my Frost, he felt quite at home in the character. And he was very magnificent. He had designed the costume himself, for he fancied himself at that sort of thing; and my white sparkling robes, and his scarlet satin and carbuncle embroidery, and copper and gold fringes did look rather effective side by side.

He made that an excuse for insisting that I should go with him into the Maze, although a tall Hamlet and a Henry V. of England both wanted to take me.

Potter whisked me away from them somehow, and we passed under the tapestry curtains while one of the two Hungarian bands Mrs. Ess Kay had hired played a waltz which made me long to dance.

"This way to the Maze; this way to the Maze," a man dressed like a Beefeater was continually saying. He stood just outside the door, in a kind of canvas vestibule, lined with greenery, so that it looked like the entrance to a bower.

The passage to the marquee had been made so beautiful, that I couldn't help crying out to Potter with admiration. Not an inch of the canvas showed, for we walked through a sort of tunnel of roses, all lit up with invisible electric lights. It was like the way to fairyland; and the floor was covered with a mat of artificial grass, like they have for stage lawns, Potter said.

I thought, when we came to the end of the rose-tunnel, we should find ourselves in a big open space in the marquee, but when the tunnel stopped, we were in a narrow alley between tall green bushes, set so thickly and so close together that we couldn't see what was on the other side. Above us, instead of the canvas roof of the marquee (which must have been over all), a violet mist seemed to float, with a very faint, soft light filtering through it, like blue moonlight. I suppose it must have been ever and ever so many thicknesses of blue gauze, with shaded lights hanging above, but the effect was mysterious and alluring.

We had only gone on a little way when we arrived at a tiny house built apparently of red flowers; and there was a red light coming out of the one little window. "The Witch of the Woods Lives Here," said a card on the door.

We pushed, and inside was a room, with a young woman in white, crystal-gazing as hard as she could. She had also a velvet cushion on which you laid your hand, and she told your character and your fortune. Some people in historical dress were ready to come out just as we were going in, and one of them said, "It's Madame Cortelyn. Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox must have given her at least five hundred dollars or she wouldn't have come a step."

We had our hands done, and the Witch of the Woods told me that I had come from "across the water," but that I would marry a man on this side; and then she saw some one in the crystal who looked so exactly like Potter Parker, that I wished I had stopped outside her red house.

After this, we kept losing ourselves in different green-walled paths, and suddenly coming on booths where variety entertainments were going on; or funny cardboard pagodas, where celebrated Japanese artists did your portrait in five minutes on rice paper; or silk tents with conjuring shows. And there was a place where you fished in a small round pond with magnets and caught little metal frogs with jewels in their heads, which you picked out. Farther on was a miniature Eastern bazaar where girls in gauze danced, while you drank Turkish coffee and pushed spoonfuls of sherbet under the lace on your mask. And there was a kinematograph entertainment of a bull fight, which I wouldn't look at, and some martyrs being reluctantly eaten by lions; and Otero dancing.

All the masked people we met were enjoying themselves very much, and saying this was the best thing for years. And it really was fun, but at last I thought we must have seen it all, and I wanted to go out. Besides, I was tired of being with Potter, who would be sentimental, though I begged him not.

"How do you propose to escape?" he asked. "This is

a Maze. The proper dodge in a Maze is to be lost, and I am lost. So are you. We're lost together."

"But I want to be found now," said I. "We've been lost long enough. There are lots of other things to do."

"And there's all night to do them in," said Potter. "I daresay we shall be lost for an hour or so yet. We've been wandering around from one path to another, and we've never seen the same thing twice, so perhaps there's a lot more to explore."

"You must know," I said. "It wasn't kept a secret from you, as it was from me. You must have been through this Maze heaps of times, and of course you know the way out."

"If I did, I've forgotten it," Potter coolly remarked. Then he changed his tone. "You make me forget everything, Betty—everything but yourself."

"You're not to call me Betty!" I said crossly, for I was tired of having conversations turned like that. And I thought that I would be having much more fun with someone else; for what is the good of wearing a mask, if you are only to talk with people you know?

"There's something else I'd a great deal sooner call you," he half whispered. "Come into this little dell where the fountain is, and the orange trees, and let me tell you."

"I don't want to know," I said.

"Yes, you do. Come along, anyhow, and I'll pick you an orange. Perhaps there'll be something nice inside it, like there was in the toad's head."

I wasn't to be bribed in that way, but he took hold of my hand, and pulled, so that I had to go with him unless I wished to resist and be silly. Several people were coming towards us round the twist of the path, and one tall man ahead of the others, dressed very plainly like a Puritan, was looking hard at us. Rather than make a scene, I

went quietly with Potter; but as soon as he had whisked me into the little dell with the orange trees and the fountain, he pushed one of the trees, and it moved forward in a groove, so as to block up the entrance and hide the dell from anyone who walked along the path.

"That's not a bad trick, is it?" said he. "I had that arranged on purpose."

"On purpose for what?" I was silly enough to ask.

"To bring you here, and get you to myself. This is Betty's Bower; but nobody knows it except you and me."

With that, he pulled off his mask, and made as if he would help me to do the same with mine, but I stepped back, and almost tumbled over into the fountain. Perhaps I would, if he hadn't caught me round the waist; but instead of letting go when he had steadied me on my feet, he drew me closer to him. I gave a twist and a little angry cry, and just then, to my joy, someone from outside pushed the orange tree back in its groove so as to leave an opening again.

I darted out, and caught a glimpse of the tall Puritan man who was apparently engaged in pulling the tree forward so as to close the gap and shut Potter in.

It was so quick, that I hardly had time to understand whether it was being done for my sake or not, but I didn't stop to think; I simply ran. I met harlequins, and queens, kings and columbines hunting in couples (the green alleys were only broad enough for two), but I pushed by them and went flitting down path after path, though voices called after me, and people pretended to shiver with cold as Frost passed.

Then, suddenly, "I think this is a way out," said a voice I knew, speaking just behind me. It was the voice of my brown man. I could have recognised it among thousands. But when I looked, it was the tall figure of the grey

Puritan who had helped me to get away from Potter Parker.

I didn't answer a word; not even to say "Thank you"; or "Is this really you, Mr. Brett?" I just went in the direction he said, and in another minute I was out under the Italian pergola, draped with roses and wistaria, that runs for a long way overlooking the sea. Then I glanced over my shoulder, and he was there, but hesitating as if he hadn't decided whether to come with me, or go back.

When I saw this, I did stop and mumble in a low voice, "It is you, isn't it, Mr. Brett?"

"Yes," he answered. "I hope you forgive me?"

"Oh, I thank you," said I. "I—wanted to come away. But how did you know that—and how did you know me?"

"I couldn't help seeing that you were being pretty well forced to do something you didn't want to do," he replied, coming a few steps nearer; and there seemed to be nobody under the pergola except just us two. "I don't suppose I had any right to be angry at seeing that happen, but I was. So I did what I did on the spur of the moment. As for recognising you—I—well, you're rather tall, you know, and have a way of holding your head that—that isn't easily forgotten."

"I'm sorry I'm so badly disguised," I said, laughing. "But I'm glad *you* knew me. I'm so glad, too, that I'm out here. I began to have—quite a stifled feeling. How lovely it is in this pergola, isn't it? Do you think we might walk for a few minutes—and get cool?"

"*May* I walk with you?" he asked, in a humble sort of way, that gave me a funny little pain in my heart.

"Please do," I said quickly, and as cordially as I could—far more cordially than I would have spoken to any man in Mrs. Ess Kay's set. "It's nice to see you here to-night."

"You must be very much surprised."

I had said "Yes," before I stopped to think; and then I was sorry, because it showed that I was thinking he did not belong in such a scene as this. But it was too late to go back, so I went on, instead. "It's a good surprise."

"It's more than kind of you not quite to have forgotten a waif like me," he said.

"I shall never forget you," said I. "Why, of course, I couldn't." And I noticed that my voice sounded quite earnest, just as I felt; but I wasn't sure that I ought to let him know—even if he was poor and unlucky—that I did feel so sincerely about it. "There's Vivace, you know, for one reason."

"What about Vivace?"

"Oh, you needn't pretend; because I was sure you gave him to me, and I wanted so much to write to that Club and thank you, only I thought as you had put no name, perhaps I'd better not. I must tell you now, though; I can't think how you came to be so kind."

"It was one of the greatest pleasures I have ever had. *You* were kind not to be offended with me. I didn't mean to take a liberty. I thought you would like the little chap."

"I love him dearly. Often I should have been dreadfully homesick if it hadn't been for him. He always seems to understand if I feel gloomy, and he does his dear little brindled best to cheer me up."

"Vivace is a lucky and happy dog."

"But don't you miss him?"

"No. For I like to think that you have him. You see, you were very kind to me, when I was in a hard position, and a good deal down on my luck. There was nothing I could do to show how I appreciated it—until I thought of

Vivace. It was our little talk on the dock, about 'finding a lost dog,' that put the idea into my head."

"I guessed as much," said I, laughing. "It was that made me sure at once who it was I had to thank for Vivace. And—I was glad he had been yours. After what I'd seen you do on board ship, you know, I—I honoured you. And I feel proud to think that—we are friends."

"You think of me as your friend?" he asked, in a voice that showed he was glad, or excited, or something that wasn't quite calm.

"Indeed, I do think of you so," I assured him. "And you've proved your friendship for me three times. Once on the dock. Once, by giving up dear Vivace for me. And now again to-night, when you came to my rescue. I was—really bored in there, you know. And people seem to give themselves so much liberty in—in their jokes when they're masked."

"I have to thank the masks for being at Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox's house to-night," said Jim Brett. "You must be wondering how they let me in, considering that, on account of the masks, everybody had to show their invitation cards at the gates. I had mine all right. But—there are such things as newspaper reporters, as you know to your sorrow. I don't say I *am* here in that capacity; but I leave you to draw your own conclusions."

"What fun!" I exclaimed.

"It is fun now; I had no right to dare, but I did dare to hope that I might have a glimpse of you. I was sure that I should recognise you."

"If I'd dreamed of your being here, I should have recognised you," I said. "You're taller than any other man here, I think."

"Men grow tall in the West, where I come from."

"And strong."

"Yes, and strong, too—thank God."

"And brave."

"Men are brave all the world over."

"I should think there are none braver than you, Mr. Brett," I said.

"It's glorious for a man like me to hear such kind words from a girl like you, though I don't deserve them," he answered. "But I shall try to deserve them. All my life I shall be better for having heard them from your lips. You can hardly guess what it is to me. Perhaps the thing that comes nearest to it, would be if a prisoner for life in some dark pit heard a voice of sympathy speaking to him—actually to him—from a high white star."

"Oh, don't speak of yourself as a prisoner in the dark!" I cried.

"What else am I, when I stop to reflect how hopelessly I must be removed by circumstances from glorious heights—where stars shine."

"But there can be nothing in your circumstances, Mr. Brett," I insisted, eagerly, "which need remove you from *any* heights. I wonder you—so brave and strong, and an American, too—can say that of yourself. Why, you can reach anything, do anything you really wish, if you just want it enough."

"Do you, an English girl, a daughter of the aristocracy, tell me that?" he asked.

"I do. As if that makes any difference—any real, *true* difference, I mean, when it comes to the heart of things. Oh, I've been thinking of such matters a great deal lately. I suppose because I'm among Americans. It must be that which has put the subject so much in my head."

"Tell me what you have been thinking."

"Oh, I can hardly tell. But for one thing, I've begun

to see that a man—a man like you, for instance, Mr. Brett—oughtn't to call himself unlucky because he's poor, and has perhaps not been able to have as many advantages as richer men. He ought simply to feel that he has it in him to make himself equal in every way with the highest."

"You mean, he can 'hustle,' as the saying is with us, and get rich, so as to stand on an equality with millionaires?"

"No, it wasn't money I was thinking about. I've met a good many millionaires since I've been here, but I've seen none whom you need look upon as your superior. What I mean is that you've only to be ambitious enough, and not *feel* that you're handicapped by your start, to attain to what you want in life—yes, whatever it may be."

"You mean all this, Lady Betty?" he asked quickly. "You have as much faith as that in me?"

"Yes," I answered; and the stars and the sea seemed to sing with my thoughts. I felt uplifted, somehow. It was a wonderful sensation, which it would be impossible to describe. But I had an exciting impression that Jim Brett shared it. The music of the Hungarian band flowed out from the house, and beat in my blood. His voice sounded as if it beat in his, too.

"You can't dream what my ambitions are, or maybe you wouldn't say that."

"I'm sure they would only be noble ones."

"It's true; they are noble. Yet you might not approve. But they're part of my life. I couldn't give them up now, and live."

"I should like to hear about them," I said, almost more to myself than to him.

"Some day, if we meet again—and I mean we shall, since you have called me friend—perhaps you will let me tell you about them. I shall ask you to listen. But not now. I daren't now. The time hasn't come. Only prom-

ise me this, Lady Betty; that you won't forget me; that you'll think of me kindly, sometimes."

"I do think of you very often," I said, "and talk about you to Vivace. Poor little Vivace. *He* doesn't forget. How he did whimper when I had to drag him away from you that day in the wistaria arbour at Central Park. *This* isn't unlike that arbour, is it? There's wistaria here too. I believe I shall always think of that day when I see wistaria. It is odd we should meet again next time in a place so much the same—and just as unexpectedly."

"Just as unexpectedly," echoed Mr. Brett, in an odd, thoughtful tone. "It's wonderful that we should meet at all—considering everything." Then he laughed, rather bitterly, I thought. "Aren't you afraid of me, Lady Betty, after your experience of journalists—since I've half hinted to you I may be acting in that capacity tonight?"

"Afraid of you?" I repeated, laughing. "As if I could be. I would trust you in everything."

As I said that, a lot of people came out of the Maze in the marquee, by the exit Mr. Brett had found for me. They streamed into the dimly lighted pergola, in their fantastic costumes, laughing and talking, and the beautiful peace of the blue night—broken only by the throb of distant music—was gone completely.

I had thought of taking off my mask, but I was glad now that I'd kept it on.

They came towards us, all in great spirits, having a game of "Follow my Leader," and their leader, a Chinese Mandarin, was offering to guide them to the Cave of Aladdin. I was glad that the Flame Spirit wasn't in the gay procession. Evidently he had missed me, and gone some other way; or else he was too angry to wish to find me again.

The crowd stopped to speak to us, making jokes in disguised voices. Some of the things they said made me feel that it would be uncomfortable to linger behind with the Puritan, when they had passed on.

"Let's join them, shall we?" I asked. "They're going to Aladdin's Cave. Wouldn't you like to see it?"

"Yes," he said. And we followed the wild party, at a discreet distance.

We went into the house again, by a roundabout way, and it wasn't until we were in the big hall that we learned just how Aladdin's Cave was to be found. On a background of dark red flowers, made into a great shield and hung over a door, glittered and scintillated three words, in electric light, "To Aladdin's Cave." The letters had been lighted up only since I had been gone, for I suppose the idea was to make everyone go into the Maze first.

We had to pass through several rooms and corridors, all of which had been emptied of furniture and lined with canvas scenery cleverly painted to illustrate events in the story of Aladdin. Everything was shown up to the time that Aladdin went down into the Cave at the bidding of the magician disguised as his "uncle"; and then came the entrance of the cave itself, which was done in imitation rockwork. But I knew that it was the way down to the cellar. Either the stairs had been removed, or else covered up with a theatrical kind of embankment, that made a winding path, twisting back and forth under a roof of the imitation rock, and sloping always downward. At the bottom was a screen of spun glass, made to look like a falling cataract of bright water, and until you had passed out from behind it you saw nothing except a glow of rosy light filtering through the transparent glass. But when you did come out, unless you were a stick or a stone, you couldn't resist giving an "Oh!" of surprised admiration.

194 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

The whole cellar—at least all of it that was left visible—had been turned into a fairy cave of jewels. The walls and ceiling looked like rocks studded with blazing rubies and flashing diamonds. The rough pillars which supported the floor of the house above were great sparkling stalactites and stalagmites. The cemented floor was covered with sand that glittered like diamond dust, and there were fruit trees and rose bushes, rows of tall hollyhocks, and buds of tulips all apparently made of illuminated jewels, something like the transformation scene in a Pantomime they once took me to see—only a hundred times prettier.

At the far end of the Cave a bright red light kept coming and going, but I couldn't see by what it was made, because of the laughing crowd collected round it. We went nearer, and as others moved away we took their places, so that at last we saw what caused the light and made the great attraction for the people.

It was a giant lamp of a strange shape, standing up to the height of four or five feet from the floor, on a pedestal; and behind it stood the Genie, a fearful and wonderful apparition who said things, in a deep bass voice, which made everybody shout with laughter. "It's Fred Kane, the great Funny Man," said somebody.

The Genie's witticisms came whenever anyone rubbed the lamp, which each person was requested to do, as he or she approached. While it was being rubbed the magic lamp flared up, and gave out the bright red light we'd seen at a distance, and simultaneously the Genie took something from a huge sequin covered bag he had looped over one of his arms. If the person who rubbed the lamp was a man, he dipped into the left hand bag; if a woman, he dived into the right hand one. Each time a beautiful tinket came out, and was presented with a low bow and an excruciat-

ingly funny speech, suitable to the character which the person had undertaken for the evening. His wit never failed.

Mr. Brett and I went up together. The Genie crossed arms and grabbed something for us out of both his bags at the same time. Then, by mistake, he gave me the thing from the left hand bag, and Mr. Brett the one from the right. We walked away to let others have their chance, looking at the presents we had got. It was funny, they both happened to be rings.

Mine was twisted bands of platinum and gold, forming a knot to hold a cabuchon sapphire. His was a thin setting for seven stones, set in a straight row; diamond, emerald, amethyst, ruby, emerald, sapphire, topaz.

"Yours is meant for a woman, and mine for a man," I said. "He got them out of the wrong bags. But they're both pretty, and so queer."

"Will you—shall we change?" he asked.

"Oh, I didn't mean to suggest that," I hurried to say. "I can give mine to my brother when I go home. And you—there must be some one——"

"I've no sister. And there's no one else," said Mr. Brett. "Do have it. You see, I couldn't get it on my little finger. And won't you keep the big one too? It isn't as if I were like Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox's other guests——"

I couldn't bear to hear him say that, so I broke in and insisted that he should have the ring. "She would want you to have it of course, if she knew," I said. "And besides, I want you to, which is something."

"It's everything," he answered.

Then we changed rings, and I told him that I hoped his would bring him luck, glorious luck.

"Do you wish it may give me what I want most in the world?" he asked; and I said that I did.

"What do you wish mine may give me?" I went on.

"What do you want most? Great wealth?" he questioned me.

I shook my head.

"To have the world at your feet?"

"I shouldn't know what to do with it."

"To have the one you love best on earth love you?"

"I should have to stop and think which one it is."

"Then I wish that you may love the one who loves you best on earth and more than all the world."

Just as I was looking up, surprised at his tone more than his words, there came a burst of music, and part of the wall, with the platform on which the Genie and his Lamp had been standing, rolled away. The other big room of the cellar was revealed, with quantities of little tables all laid out for supper, and the walls covered with smilax and roses. In the middle of this new room was a huge illuminated ship of ice, in a green sea.

Everybody exclaimed and laughed in their surprise at such an unexpected transformation. Now was the time for unmasking, of course, and there were shrieks of surprise and amusement as people discovered who their companions really were. For a minute—I'm sure it couldn't have been more—I forgot Mr. Brett, to stare at the great glittering ice ship. When I turned to speak to him, he was gone. And whether he vanished on purpose, because he didn't want to unmask in a company of strange people, or whether he was separated from me by the sudden press of the crowd, I don't know. I suppose I shall never know. I only know that I lost him, and that I was immediately surrounded by other men, saying nice things about my costume, wanting me to have supper with them, and asking me for dances afterwards.

The rest of the night went by with a wild rush. Wa



*"When I turned to speak to him he was gone . . . and I was immediately surrounded
by other men asking me for dances"*

on.
es-

you

ore
t of
his
oom
all
and
um-

at
ine
sur-
om-
ln't
the
him,
be-
nge
dea
ever
me-
out
and

Wa

didn't stop dancing till four, we young people; and I believe the older ones played bridge. We had a second supper served upstairs towards dawn, and when the last people went away, it was broad and glorious daylight.

"Well, deah," said Sally, cosily, when everyone had gone, and she had come into my room to help me undress. "Had you a good time?"

"Splendid!" said I, sighing with joy. "I'm dancing still—in my head. My first ball!"

"Katherine doesn't call it a ball. But that's a detail. Had you any proposals?"

"Oh, Sally, how came you to think of such a thing? But isn't it *too* extraordinary? I had three."

"Why extraordinary?"

"Because I hardly knew the men!"

"Americans make up their minds quickly about what they want."

"So Mr. P—— So I've been told."

"Accept anyone?"

"Not I."

"Didn't even give them a wee mite of hope?"

"Dear me, no."

"Poor Potter—for one."

"Sally, I do wish he *wouldn't*—do that sort of thing, since you speak of it. It makes it so embarrassing. And somehow, I don't feel he really means it. I've always the impression that—that he does it because he thinks he ought."

"He'd like to marry you, Betty. There's no doubt of that. And one can't blame him for it."

"Well, if he keeps on, I shall be driven away," I said. "Although they don't *want* me to go home yet, for—several reasons. I don't want to go, either. I'm having a wonderful experience. But——"

"Haven't you met any man you could imagine yourself caring for, deah? Or, perhaps, you don't fancy Americans."

"Oh, I do," I exclaimed. "They're all great fun. And one—onc man I've met I think superior to any other I ever knew. But then, I've known so few, and I don't know him well. You needn't look at me like that. It isn't a romance, you dear. I'm most unlikely to know him any better, ever. He— isn't like the rest. He isn't like anybody else I ever saw."

"Now," said Sally, coaxingly, "you might tell me if he's one of the three who proposed?"

"Indeed, he isn't, and he never will. Why, Sally, I don't mind telling you I mean that Mr. Brett, who was on the ship, and whom we met afterwards accidentally in the Park. He is rather wonderful—considering his station—isn't he?"

"He'd be rather wonderful in any station. That's my theory about him."

"I think it's mine, too. He was here to-night—as a newspaper reporter, he hinted, though he didn't exactly say he was, in so many words. Did he talk to you?"

"Yes," said Sally. "Indirectly, I got him his chance to come."

"I gave him good advice," said I, laughing. "All about his future, and ambition, and things like that. I hope he'll take it."

"He'll probably try all he knows. Did he thank you prettily?"

"I'm not sure whether he thanked me at all. But he gave me this ring, and wished me luck with it. It was the Genie's present to him in Aladdin's Cave. I changed with him, for the one I had. But this is much prettier. Look."

"D-E-A-R-E-S-T, Dearest," Sally spelt out, as she held the third finger of my right hand, on which I'd slipped the ring.

"Where do you find that?" I asked quickly.

"Don't you know? Why, the stones spell it. Diamond, emerald, amethyst, ruby, emerald, sapphire, topaz."

I felt my cheeks burn when she gave me this explanation.

I wonder if Mr. Brett knew?

XII

ABOUT A WEDDING AND A DISASTER

IT'S more than a fortnight since I've been able to write about any of the things that have happened to me. The last I did was on the morning after the Great Affair, when we were looking forward to the Pink Ball in the evening. Mrs. Ess Kay didn't quite have her wish, for the ball was a moderate success; but it did seem a pale pink after the gorgeousness of the night before, and it might have been still paler (as everyone felt rather washed out) if it hadn't been for one special excitement. Mohunsleigh's engagement to Carolyn Pitchley was announced, and we were told that the wedding would have to be soon, as Mohunsleigh had had news which called him back to England, and he wanted to take his bride with him.

Before I stopped to think, I'd promised Carolyn to be one of her bridesmaids; but five minutes later I would almost have liked to change my mind, because of Potter. He was asked to be an usher. (I didn't know at the time what that meant, but I had a vague impression it was something of importance at American weddings) so that I was sure to see a lot of him if I were bridesmaid, and in any case, I was beginning to feel he might make it too awkward for me to visit much longer with Mrs. Ess Kay.

However, when on second thoughts, I tried to get out of my promise, by hinting that I might have to go home, Carolyn seemed ready to cry and said that if I threw her over it would spoil everything. The wedding would be in

ten days, and surely, I hadn't been thinking of going back to England as soon as that?

It was quite true, I hadn't. And more than that, I knew I shouldn't be welcome at home. I made up my mind to get through somehow, and told Carolyn I had only been joking.

She had always wanted to be married at Grace Church in New York, but New York is no place for August weddings, if an August wedding you must have; so Carolyn's invitations, which appeared almost immediately after the engagement was announced, told everyone that Mr. and Mrs. Pitchley begged them to be present at their daughter's marriage in the drawing room of the Château de Plaisance.

I didn't know that you could be married in a drawing room, but it seems you can, quite properly. However, when I go home I don't think I'd better say much about that part of Mohunleigh's wedding, or some of the old-fashioned people mightn't understand. I should hate them to get the idea just because of the drawing room, that poor Carolyn was morganatic, or something.

She seemed ecstatically happy, more than I could imagine any girl being if she had to marry Mohunleigh, who, although a dear good fellow when you know him, isn't a bit romantic. But he suddenly blossomed out into all sorts of pleasant American ways, sent Caro flowers and things every day, though I fancy he couldn't afford it, gave her a lovely solitaire diamond ring, which I'm sure he couldn't, and a "guard," an heirloom in his family.

It would have been shocking, Carolyn said, for her to be seen anywhere after the invitations were out, though I can't think why, as she didn't seem at all ashamed of marrying Mohunleigh, but rather the contrary, and asked me hundreds of questions about what she would have to do when

she was a Countess. Fortunately, though, she had lots of things to keep her busy indoors, trying on such frocks as she could get made in a hurry, and writing letters to every girl she knew, announcing her engagement.

The funniest things about the whole affair were—for me—the ushers, the rehearsals for the wedding, and having a married woman as a sort of head bridesmaid. Carolyn's best girl chum was married herself in the spring, so she had to be what they call a Matron of Honour.

It seemed horribly irreverent to rehearse for the ceremony, but nobody else thought so, except Mohunsleigh and me, and Mohunsleigh said in confidence, that he'd found out the bridegroom was a mere lay figure at a wedding,—anyhow in America,—and he intended to let Caro do exactly as she liked until after they were married. Then she might have to find out that once in a while it would be just as well if she did what he liked. But he asked me not to mention this to Carolyn and her stepmother, so I didn't. And in spite of my objection, the rehearsals were interesting. I felt as if I oughtn't to laugh and joke, but the others all did tremendously, so I did too in the end.

Mohunsleigh was disappointed because that Californian friend of his (whom he would have visited if it hadn't been for falling in love unexpectedly and getting married) couldn't come and be his best man. He urged him, but something interfered, Mohunsleigh didn't tell us what, and Mr. Jameson B. Harborough wasn't even able to come to the wedding. I was disappointed, too, as Mohunsleigh had told us such romantic things about his friend, that we all wanted to see him. Mr. Harborough had been a sailor, and a cowboy, and had left everything to fight in the Spanish war, where he'd done brave and splendid things, and might have stayed in the army afterwards as a Captain, if he had liked. But he preferred to go back to his

old, free life, and was still a poor young man until two or three years ago, when some land in which he'd invested a few savings, turned out to have gold in it—quantities of gold, gold enough to make a famous mine, and give Mr. Harborough a great fortune. Sally knew a good deal about the new millionaire, too. It seemed that cousins of his in the West somewhere were acquaintances of hers, and had told her how immensely he had been sought out and flattered in San Francisco and other places, since he'd become rich. He hated it so much that he'd gone abroad and stopped a long time wandering about in strange Eastern countries making friends with Bedouins and people like that, who love horses better than money, and on account of certain experiences with women, he'd got almost a morbid horror of falling in love with some girl who would only pretend to like him, while in reality, all she cared about was his money. Nobody in Mrs. Ess Kay's set knew Jameson B. Harborough, though everybody would like to, so it was a blow to others beside Mohunsleigh and me that he couldn't or wouldn't show himself at Newport for the wedding.

With the exception of this one hitch, nothing went wrong so far as the wedding party was concerned, but with me things began to go very wrong several days before Caro and Mohunsleigh were married. There was a fuss of some sort between Sally and Mrs. Ess Kay, and Sally came to me, very much upset, to say that she would have to leave The Moorings immediately, she couldn't stand it twenty-four hours longer, even for my sake. She had promised to visit a friend in Chicago, sooner or later, so she would go straight to her, and if anything too tiresome should happen before I was ready to sail for home, I had better run out there;—the friend would be delighted to have me. Sally gave me the address, and I told her I would write often, but of course I didn't dream of having to accept her

invitation. I missed her badly, but not as much as if the wedding had not been so near.

Poor old Mohunsleigh—who knows more about the manners of polar bears than etiquette in American society,—was coached by Potter; and the night before the wedding rehearsal reluctantly gave an elaborate dinner to his best man, (an officer in Stan's regiment who happened to turn up) and the six ushers. The same day Carolyn had her Matron of Honour and the bridesmaids to lunch, and we did have fun talking over things. I should have thought a luncheon with all girls and no men might have been a little tame, and perhaps it would in England, but in America girls are not at all shy. They say just as funny things as men, and take the most beautiful pains to amuse each other, so that it's impossible to be bored, and for hours on end you forget there is such a creature as Man.

At home, Mohunsleigh would have had to give us things, of course; but in America, it appears that the bridegroom makes presents to the best man and the ushers; so it was from Carolyn that I got a duck of a brooch, like an American flag, with stripes of diamonds and rubies, and the blue part sapphires. Mohunsleigh said that, as he was awfully hard up, it was bad luck for him to have to provide each of the bridesmaids with bouquets and chiffon muffs, and he could not see at all that it was a pretty idea for everything they carried in their hands to come from the bridegroom. But as Sally had told me that Carolyn's father had settled ten million dollars on her, I don't think Mohunsleigh need have complained.

Although it was in a house, the wedding was very picturesque, and the bride and groom stood under a bell of white roses about as large as Big Ben.

I enjoyed it all immensely, for it was my first time as bridesmaid, and I had a lovely frock and hat (copied from

an old picture) for which—when I wanted the bill—I found Sally had paid. There was a crush at the reception, but it only lasted two hours. After the bride and groom had gone, with showers of rice and satin slippers, we stayed and had a dance—just the ushers and bridesmaids and a few young people, who were intimate friends of Carolyn's.

It was then that my greatest troubles began. On a pretence of showing some wedding presents which he said I hadn't seen because they were in a different room from the others, Potter got me alone and proposed again. This time he didn't laugh and joke, as he had before, so that I could take it half in fun even while it made me uncomfortable, but was very serious indeed. When I wanted to go out he stood in front of the door, and wouldn't let me pass; and his chin and eyes looked so horribly determined that he was more like Mrs. Ess Kay than ever.

"My dear little ladyship," he said, "you're not going to get away until you've given me my answer."

"But I have given it," said I.

"I don't call what you've given me an answer, because you see, I want you so much, and I've made up my mind so hard and fast to have you, that I shan't take 'no' for an answer."

"I don't see how you can help it, as it's the only one I have to give, and I've told you that two dozen times at least," I said, beginning to feel irritable, as I always have from the first, whenever Potter talked about love.

"I know you have, but that doesn't count. There's no such word as fail in the bright lexicon of my youth. Look here, dear girl, you don't quite realise perhaps what a good time I'd give you if you married me. I've got as much money as my sister has, and I'd do just as you liked about staying in the army. You could have a house in New York, and a whole, real live castle in your own country,

if you liked. I wouldn't care a rap how much you spent on clothes, and there isn't a woman in America who's got better jewels than you should have—I'd see to that. Besides, you could do what you chose—for your own people. I couldn't stint you; I want to be friends with them. I never talked like this to you before, but you see what I mean; and now, isn't what I've said any inducement?"

"I wouldn't need any such inducements if I loved you," I answered. "But I don't, and can't; and somehow I never have been able to believe that you really loved me."

"If that's the trouble, you can make your mind easy. I want you badly."

"Then I'm sorry, for—I simply *can't* marry you. I should be miserable, and so would you."

"I'll risk that. You're too much of an English rosebud to understand anything about love. What you must do is to trust others who know what you ought to want better than you do yourself. Your mother, for instance. You'd like to please her—and your sister and brother, wouldn't you? Well, they all want you to say 'yes' to me."

"How do you know?" I broke out.

"I *do* know. You can ask Kath if it isn't true."

"I don't want to talk to her about it."

"You needn't, if you'll only be a good girl and do what everybody expects you to do. Come now, do say yes, and let's be happy."

That did make me furious.

"Anyone would think I was a naughty child, and you were some kind of medicine the whole family was waiting for me to take!" I exclaimed. "It's a wonder you don't get out your watch and give me five minutes to do it in."

His eyes began to sparkle with anger. I believe he would have liked to box my ears, and I know I could have boxed his.



"I swept past him with my nose in the air, trying to look like mother"

"I thought English girls were brought up to be sensible," said he, "and amiable."

"I can't help what you thought," I answered, rudely, for I was getting desperate. "You've no right to keep me here like this, and it won't do you a bit of good, for if you stand there till we're both in our second childhood, I won't change my mind. You ought to know that now, Mr. Parker. Please let me go."

He didn't move.

"If you don't, I'll scream at the top of my lungs," I said. And he must have seen that I meant it, for he flung open the door with a slam and I swept past him, with my nose in the air, trying to look like Mother.

I didn't see him again till it was time to go home. Then he drove back with Mrs. Ess Kay and me to The Moorings in the shut-up motor car, and didn't open his mouth once on the way—which was wonderful for him, and seemed somehow ominous.

I had been too angry and excited after that scene of ours to feel unhappy, or to worry much about what might come next, but that drive, short as it was, with Potter freezingly silent, and Mrs. Ess Kay alarmingly polite, made me feel that the end had come. I was sure she had been told by her brother what an obstinate, ungrateful girl I was, and I had a guilty sinking of the heart, as if I really had been both. There was no Sally to protect me now, no one to advise me what to do, and there was a big lump in my throat as I said good night and went to my own room.

I hadn't been there long when there came a knock at the door—the same determined kind of inexorable knock which Mother gives when I've been found out in something which she thinks it her duty to make me sorry for.

I'd locked the door, and would have liked to make some

208 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

excuse not to open it; but it was Mrs. Ess Kay's door, and Mrs. Ess Kay's room, just as much as it was Mrs. Ess Kay's brother I had refused.

She sailed in all in black, like an executioner, though, of course, executioners don't go down into history wearing chiffon trimmed with jet.

"My dear Betty," said she, subsiding into a large arm-chair, "I want to have a serious talk with you."

It would have been stupid pretending not to understand, so I just looked at her, and waited.

"I daresay, you can guess what it's about?" she went on.

"I suppose so," I said. "I'm very sorry about everything. But I can't help not being in love with Mr. Parker, can I?"

"I should have thought," said Mrs. Ess Kay, "that your Mother's daughter would have attached very little importance to being in love. Apparently she hasn't been as successful with you as with Lady Victoria. Believe me, Betty, there's nothing in it—nothing at all."

"In what?"

"In what you call 'being in love.' A girl fancies a man for his eyes, or his dancing, or because he is strong, and she thinks she's in love with him, but it's only a fancy which passes before she's been his wife for twelve months, and she wonders what she ever saw in him then. A year after you have been married to my brother, you will be very fond of him, and you will be one of the most important young women in America as well as in Europe. Oh, my dear, you will *have* to take him. Your mother will never forgive you, if you don't. It was quite an understood thing between us, when she lent you to me, that if possible there was to be a match. Your beauty and name, and Potter's money. He's really a very good fellow—a temper, per-

haps; but I wouldn't give much for a man without one, and like most Americans, he'll make a splendid husband."

"For someone," I murmured.

"For you, Betty. I assure you, I daren't tell the Duchess you've definitely refused Potter. You must be persuaded. Be engaged to him; let him follow you to England."

"If I did that, I should find myself being married off to him before I knew."

"Well, and if you did? It would be because you'd had the chance to change your mind."

I shook my head. "I must go home to England," I said, "but Mr. Parker mustn't follow me."

Mrs. Ess Kay's face hardened.

"I'm afraid if you go home after refusing Potter, you'll have a very poor welcome, my child. The Duchess has been kind enough to take me a little into her confidence. I don't think she would have sent you over with me, if she hadn't known something about Potter; and your sister's affairs aren't arranged yet. Oh, you needn't blush, and look so indignant. The Duchess didn't mind putting her difficulties in a letter, when I wrote her you weren't behaving quite satisfactorily, and you may take it from me that at present things stand like this: You must go back an engaged girl or else stay away until Lady Victoria is married."

If Mother were different, I should have hoped Mrs. Ess Kay was exaggerating; but as it was, I believed her, though I did my best to be high-eyebrowed and incredulous, till she remarked that I could see the Duchess's letter if I liked, though it might be rather embarrassing.

I was sure it would be, and preferred to take its contents on faith; but I was so miserable that I had to keep my eyes staring wide open to prevent the tears dropping down. I

210 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

was tired, and forlorn, and homesick—for Vic and Stan, and the dear dogs and everything except Mother—and I felt such a horrible weakness creeping over me that I could even imagine myself by and by doing what they meant me to do. I thought the best thing was to gain a respite, lest Mrs. Ess Kay should drag some kind of a concession from me, which I would have to live up to, afterwards.

"I can't talk any more about it now," I said. "I believe what you say, but it only makes it worse for me, to think that Mother should have made what amounts to a kind of bargain with you. Maybe by to-morrow everything won't seem so dreadful."

She got up, with a relieved air. Perhaps even she hadn't been enjoying the conversation.

"Of course it won't," said she. "It won't seem dreadful at all. You've no idea how happy we're all going to be. Now, just you sleep well, and dream sweet dreams, and you'll wake up feeling a different girl. Maybe poor Potter hasn't been as tactful as he might be; that's because he's too much in love to be clever. But he has a lovely surprise for you to-morrow. Something connected with a certain finger of your left hand. I promise you that you'll like it; and now I'm going to leave you in peace for the night." I can't tell what savage deed I mightn't have been capable of doing if she had had the idea of kissing me; but she hadn't. She merely patted me on the shoulder, and went out, leaving me to stare aimlessly at the door after she had softly closed it.

XIII

ABOUT RUNNING AWAY

I DON'T know how long it was before the thought came to me that I would take Vivace and a handbag and run away to Sally; but anyway it was before it had occurred to me to sit down.

Sally said before she went away that I was to go to her if I felt like it, and Sally always means what she says. Now I felt like it so much that it seemed suddenly the only possible thing to do, so all I had to decide was the best way and the best time to do it.

As for the time, if I didn't escape before Mrs. Ess Kay and Potter formed a hollow square round me to pour their volleys into my heart in the morning, all that was prophetic in my soul said I would never escape, but would suffer great confusion and rout.

As for the way, it was more difficult to make up my mind, but the first thing was to see how much money I had in my exchequer—which happened to be a gold purse Sally had given me.

I hadn't spent much, and since coming over, dear old Stan had sent me another fifteen pounds, which he wrote was part of one night's winnings at bridge—unusual for him, if it's true, as Vic thinks that he continually loses. Altogether, I had nearly thirty pounds in hand, which seemed a lot, only I didn't know at all how much it would cost for Vivace and me to reach Sally in Chicago; and I couldn't tell until I had got irrevocably away from Mrs. Ess Kay and The Moorings.

212 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

By this time it was nearly two o'clock, and in a couple of hours it would be light. I must sneak out of the house with a dressing bag before any of the servants were stirring, and meanwhile I must pack up all my belongings except such things as Mrs. Ess Kay had given me --so that I could write and have my boxes sent on by and by.

As soon as I had realised that there wasn't a minute to throw away, the worst was over, for I didn't stop to grizzle. I finished getting out of my bridesmaid's dress in which I had danced so gaily a little while ago, dashed a thin frock, a dressing gown and a few others things into my fitted dressing bag (which was almost too heavy to carry, but not quite), and then stuffed everything else, except a travelling frock, into the boxes that were stored in a huge wardrobe built into the wall.

I made all the haste I could, but I'm not clever at packing, so I heard some clock striking four, when I had slipped on my thin grey canvas coat and skirt, and was putting on my hat, with cold hands that trembled so much I could hardly stick in the hat pins.

I had been excited enough the day I heard I was to come to Mrs. Ess Kay, but I was twice as excited now when I was going to leave her. I felt rather frightened, still I couldn't help smiling when I said to myself how little I had thought when I learned the great news about America and Mrs. Ess Kay, in what circumstances I should part from her.

Each step Vivace and I took in the corridors and on the stairs seemed to make such an incredible noise in the quiet house, that I felt like a runaway elephant eloping with a hippopotamus, but either it wasn't as bad as I thought, or everyone was lying charmed in a magic sleep, for we got out through a window in the dining room, down the veran-

dah steps and across the lawn without being stopped, as I half expected.

I knew the way to the railway station very well, for I had often been there since I arrived (the last time was when I saw Sally off), but the question was, when would there be a train? And a good deal depended on that question, for though Mrs. Ess Kay and Potter might not exactly have the power to drag me back, I wanted to get as far away from them as I could before they discovered that I had gone.

I was horrified to find when we arrived that—as the Americans say—there was “nothing doing,” not a soul in sight, and there I was, very hot and hysterical, with Vivace and my dressing bag looking like an escaped burglaress. I had been so nervous while I was packing, that I’d been afraid of everything, even the soap in the soap dish, which had two great blinking bubbles at one end, like a pair of goblin eyes that watched me move, but I was much worse now, and I could have fallen on the neck of the first official person I saw moving about the station after I had waited for perhaps a quarter of an hour. I don’t know what he was, but when I appealed to him for news of a train for New York, instead of calling the police to give Vivace and me in charge as a dangerous pair, he scratched his head and said there was a milk train due presently, if I was mighty anxious.

A milk train sounded innocent and suitable to a girl travelling alone, but even if it hadn’t I should have been thankful to go in it. I couldn’t buy a ticket, it appeared, in the ordinary way; but when the milk train came my man introduced me to another. Perhaps he was a milkman; anyway he seemed to have authority, and he said as a favour Vivace and I could be taken. He was a nice person, and he talked a great deal after the train had given several

false starts and at last had got off. I sat on my bag, as I had on the docks, in a bare, curious car, which really belonged to the milk, and sometimes when we bumped I should have fallen on the floor if it hadn't been for him. He told me all about himself, and wanted to be told all about me, but I thought, nice as he was, it would be safer not. He asked leading questions which it was hard to keep from answering, unless I hurt his feelings; but I think he somehow got the impression that I was going to see a sick relative, though I never exactly said so.

I don't know what time I should have got to New York if I had had to travel all the way with the milk, for milk it seems objects to speed; but after we had jogged along for a couple of hours, we crawled into a station where a real train was ready to start. There were just five minutes to say farewell to my friend, and buy a ticket, when all flushed and panting, I found myself and Vivace and the bag, in a car different from any I had seen yet. It had no nice easy chairs and plate glass mirrors and wire nettings in the windows, like the one in which I'd travelled to Newport, but there were two rows of seats, and when the train moved a cloud of coal smoke poured in through the door at the front end. Babies squalled, children whined, and their faces grew black and damp with mingled dirt and heat while grown-up people scolded; but a dear old lady got into my seat before long, and just because I helped her with a band-box, she made me a present of a huge peach. I was thankful to have it, for by this time I was collapsing with hunger, having been up all night without anything to eat.

The peach made me think of Mr. Brett, and the little basket he had sent me on the docks. Then this thought suggested another. He had said he would do anything for me that was in his power, and if he were still in New York,

it was in his power to help me a good deal. He could tell me how much it would cost to go to Chicago, and he could show me how to get there.

I really believe that at first I hadn't had a thought of seeing him, but once it had got into my head, I welcomed it, begged it to sit down and make itself at home.

I could have clapped my hands with joy when I saw the Grand Central Station and the delightful *café au lait* porters with their red caps. It looked as familiar and comforting as if I'd passed through a hundred times instead of once, and I had the nice feeling that now something pleasant was sure to happen, which one has when one first arrives in Paris.

Vivace brightened up, too, and he took me out, rather than I him. I was in such a hurry to get away, for fear Potter might have come after me by a quick train, and be looking somewhere, that I flew along with my bag and Vivace, without waiting for a porter. I followed other people out of the station, with the intention of finding a cab and driving to the Club where Mr. Brett was employed; but though there were dozens of hansoms drawn up by the pavement, they had the air of being private ones. It did seem queer that so many people should have private hansoms waiting for them at this particular hour (it was half past twelve) but the drivers with their tall shiny hats, smart coats and bright, clever faces, the glitter of the harness, the newness of the cab linings and appointments all forbade any other thought. I wandered wistfully along the line, wondering if there were no public conveyances of any kind at the Grand Central, besides the trains which were as appalling as a procession of African lions. When I came to the end I caught the eye of a well-groomed young man in a pale gray top coat, looking down from his high seat at the back of a dark green hansom with great round

216 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

portholes knocked in the sides, and it struck me that there was pity kindling in his glance. I snatched at the ray as if it had been that everlasting straw which always seems to be bobbing about when an author is drowning one of his characters.

"Do you think there is anybody who could drive me?" I enquired, meekly.

"You bet, Miss," said he. "I'm engaged myself, or I'd be only too pleased, but you just speak to that other gentleman there,"—with an encouraging jerk of his sleek head towards the next vehicle. "He'll take you anywhere you want to go."

"Are you sure it isn't a private hansom?" I breathed up to him in a low, confidential voice, for the cab he indicated was even finer than his, and Stan doesn't look as smart on his coach on a Coaching Parade day in the Park, as did the gentleman I was recommended to address.

"Sure pop," said my friend, grinning, but not in a way to hurt my feelings; so I thanked him, and we both bowed very politely; and the new man, who had heard after all, said that none of the hansomns were private; anybody might have them who could pay; but I needn't be afraid, he wouldn't charge me too much.

When he asked where I wanted to go, after all I hadn't the courage to mention the Club. The only other place I could think of was the Waldorf-Astoria, where Potter had said any stranger who liked could walk in and sit down. I told the man to drive me there, so he did, and only charged me fifty cents, which he hinted was a very special price. "We don't want you English young ladies to think bad of us," he explained, and I assured him there was no danger of that, if I could judge by myself.

They wouldn't let me go into the Turkish room—which I remembered very well—with Vivace, so I had to give him

up to be fed and taken care of, and I was obliged to part with my bag too. Then I wrote a note to Mr. Brett, just a few lines, saying that I was alone in New York, in a little difficulty, and remembering his kind offer, I ventured to ask if he would come to the Turkish Room at the Waldorf-Astoria to help me with advice.

A messenger took the letter—such an aggressively brisk child, I was sure he wouldn't waste a second on the way—and as soon as he had gone I was beset with fears lest Mr. Brett should have left New York, or lest, if still in town, he might be surprised or shocked at my taking him at his word.

I was past being hungry now, but my head ached and I felt dull and stupid. There was hardly anyone in the Turkish Room, for all the world of the Waldorf-Astoria was lunching. I sat watching the door, watching the door, until I seemed to have been in that place doing that one thing and nothing else for years. My eyelids would keep dropping, and my thoughts slipping away as if they flowed past me on a slow stream. I caught them back again and again, but at last I forgot and let them go.

The next thing I knew I was raising my head with a jerk, and opening my eyes to look straight into those of Mr. Brett. It was he, there was no doubt of that, and yet he was different. In my dreamy state, I couldn't think how for an instant, but as I came to myself I saw it was all a question of dress. He had, perhaps, been making money in journalism, for he was no longer good looking in spite of his clothes. He had the most excellent grey flannels, or something of the sort; just the right kind of collar (I know it must be right, for Stan always wears it) and a waistcoat Potter himself might have envied. I didn't exactly think of these things then, but I must have uncon-

sciously taken them all in, in a flash, for I knew them afterwards.

By the time the flash had passed we were shaking hands, and he was saying in his nice voice how awfully sorry he was to have kept me waiting. He had been at the Club, but owing to a stupid mistake there had been some delay in his getting my letter.

I was even more pleased to see him than I had thought I was going to be. I felt as if I had known him all my life, and he looked so strong and handsome, and dependable, that I couldn't bear to take my eyes off his face, lest I should wake up and find him gone—because I'd been dreaming him.

"I'll tell you all about everything, if you'll sit down," I said, but instead of doing as I asked, he enquired with a queer, worried expression on his face whether I had had lunch.

"No, nor breakfast either," I replied quite gaily, but with a watery smile.

"Good heavens," said he, going as red as if I had accused him of snatching it from my lips. "Then you must have both together, before you begin to tell me anything."

"We might go out and have a sandwich somewhere," I suggested.

"There's nothing the matter with the Waldorf sandwiches."

"Except that they're expensive," said I. "You must remember you and I aren't millionaires."

"I've been doing pretty well lately," said he. "I can almost call myself rich. Please have some lunch, I can afford it, and if you refuse I'll know it's because——"

I guessed what he might be going to say, so I stopped him.

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed. "But I've run away from

Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox, and I don't want to be found. If she or her brother should have come to New York, or if anybody else——"

"I've thought of that," said he, quickly, "but we've no time to waste. You're starving. If you wouldn't mind my getting you a private dining room, and sending you in some lunch——"

"But I want you to be with me," I insisted.

He evidently hesitated, but only for a minute. I don't think he's the sort of man to hesitate long about anything.

"Very well, that's what I'd like best, of course, if you don't mind," said he. "I'll go and see to everything, and be back before you can count sixty, if you do it slowly."

I didn't do it at all, but thought how thankful I was that he had come to me, for I was sure everything would go right now.

In two or three minutes he came back to take me into a charming little dining room, where there was no danger that Mrs. Ess Kay or Potter could pounce upon us, as it was for Mr. Brett and me alone. I shuddered to think what it must be costing, but his clothes were so exceedingly good I hoped he hadn't exaggerated about the luck that had come to him.

Naturally I couldn't tell the part of my story which concerned Potter Parker; but I said that Mrs. Ess Kay wanted me to do things which I didn't think it right to do, and I couldn't stay in her house even a day longer.

"I should like to go home," I went on, "but I can't yet, and the only other thing is to join Miss Woodburn in Chicago. You remember Miss Woodburn, don't you?"

He said he remembered her very well, had read in the

220 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

newspapers that she had left Newport for Chicago, and thought it was a wise idea of mine to join her.

"I'm glad you think that," said I, "for I want to start to-day; and I hope you'll tell me how to go, how much money it will be, how long it takes to get there, and all about it."

He didn't answer for a minute, but sat looking very grave, staring at his brown hand on the white tablecloth, as if he'd never seen it before. Then he said:

"Curiously enough, I am going West this afternoon too. Would you object to my being in the same train? I wouldn't suggest such a thing, only you see as you're a stranger in the country, I might be able to help you a little."

"How splendid!" I exclaimed. "It seems almost too good to be true. You can't fancy what a relief it is to my mind."

He looked pleased at that, and said I was very kind, though I should have thought it was the other way round.

"I'll get your ticket then," he went on. "If you'll give me twenty-five dollars—five pounds, you know—I'll hand you back the change; but I'm afraid it won't be much."

"Change?" I echoed. "Why, I supposed it would be ever so much more than five pounds to get to Chicago, which is almost in Central America, isn't it?"

"The people who live there think it's central," said Mr. Brett. "But they make the railroad men keep prices down, so that dissatisfied New Yorkers can afford to go and live there. It isn't a bad journey, you'll find. I think it will interest you. You sleep and eat in the train, you know."

"What fun!" I exclaimed. "I've never slept in a train, even on the Continent."

"If you had, it would be different from this one," said he. "Can you be ready in twenty-five minutes? The train which we call the Twentieth Century, starts at 2.45."

"I'm ready now," said I. "The sooner we're on the way the better. But oh, about Vivace. Will they allow him to sleep and eat too?"

"I expect I can arrange that," Mr. Brett answered, in such a confident way that I felt sure he could do it, or anything else he set out to do. It really was lucky for me that he happened to be travelling West that same day, and such an extraordinary coincidence, too.

"Are you going on journalistic business?" I asked.

"No, it's business I'm undertaking for a friend," he explained. "But I hope to get something good for myself out of it in the end."

"Oh, I do hope you will," I replied. "I'm sure you deserve to."

"I'm sure I don't," said he, laughing. "But I shall try hard for it, all the same. You know, you told me to be ambitious."

"I know I did," I answered.

A moment later he said that he must hurry off and attend to the tickets, and I had only time to glance through some papers the waiter brought me, with columns full of Mohunsleigh's marriage, when he was back again with a cab.

While I read an account of the wedding, and gushing paragraphs about me, I wondered if there mightn't be things not so flattering in the same papers to-morrow.

"If it got out that I had run away, would there be a scandal?" I asked Mr. Brett in the cab. But he said that I needn't be afraid; Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox was much too clever a woman to let anything she wouldn't like get into the papers. She would send a paragraph to the effect

222 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

that Lady Betty Bulkeley had been suddenly called home or had gone to visit other friends, or something of that sort. "But she will almost certainly cable to your people," he went on.

"Yes, but she won't know where I've gone till afterwards, and anyhow, they can't object to my being with Miss Woodburn," I answered him.

"You don't think they'll send for you to come home at once?"

I shook my head. "They won't do that. They don't want—that is, they think it wiser for me to stop on this side longer, now I'm here."

"I'm very glad of that," said Mr. Brett and he looked at me as if he really were glad, in spite of all the trouble I'd made him.

XIV

ABOUT THE TWENTIETH CENTURY LIMITED AND CHICAGO

THE train for Chicago is perfectly wonderful, not like an ordinary, human kind of train at all. I'm in it now, and have been writing everything about the wedding and what happened afterwards, because I have a whole room of my own, and I'm much too excited to sleep.

There's a bed in the room—not a hard shelf, but quite a wide, springy bed, with electric light close by the pillow; there are walls made of mirrors; there's a sofa, a washhandstand, and a palm-leaf fan; there's netting in the window so that you can have it open without getting black; and there would be plenty of places to put my things if I'd brought three times as many. But better than anything else, there's a soft, sweet, brown maid who goes with the room and isn't an extra. She's the same brown as the porters, only paler than most, and the train wasn't ten minutes outside New York when she appeared, to ask what she could do for me. There was nothing at the time, but she didn't go away. She looked about for a minute, then pouncing on the palm leaf she began to fan me, slowly and gracefully, not holding on by anything, though the train was hurling itself through the State of New York apparently with the speed in which light travels round the world. (I never could remember how many times it can do the whole distance in a minute, but whatever it is, it has the air of being a boast.)

I thanked her a good deal, and said I wouldn't trouble her any more, though it was very nice; but she kept straight on, like a mechanical doll, until I felt that in common humanity I ought to fan her. If anyone in England, especially anyone in her position (only there aren't such positions) had asked half as many questions as she did, people would be extremely surprised and offended; but I would defy even the crossdest person to be offended with this soft brown thing. It would have been too ungrateful not to answer her nicely when she was keeping my flies at bay with extreme inconvenience to herself, so I admitted that I was English, told what county I came from, how long I'd been in the States, where I'd been staying, how I liked America, where I was going now, and ended up by satisfying her as to my age and whether I had a mother. I also stated that I was neither married nor engaged. The dear creature rewarded me for all this by telling me a great deal about herself and her relatives, and a church picnic she attended last Sunday, where there were more young gentlemen than ladies—"which always makes parties so nice for us girls."

"I must say that's a mighty pretty hat you've got," said she at last. "I reckon it came from England. And my, but that *is* a sweet waist. I'd give my life for that waist."

If I had had a twin sister of the sweet waist with me, I couldn't have resisted pressing it upon her, and I don't believe she would have refused.

As soon as Mr. Brett got me nicely settled in my room, he said we wouldn't meet again during the journey. I was sorry and wanted to know why, so he explained that his ticket was different from mine. I hope that is the only reason, really, and that it isn't because he thinks he ought not to be travelling with me. I suppose he is going second class.

I did miss him at dinner, which I had in a grand restaurant car, about half a mile away from me in the train. It was fun being there, seeing all the people, and being served by fascinating black waiters, but it would have been more fun with him. I longed to exclaim to Mr. Brett about the glorious sunset which marched with us along the Hudson River for an enchanted hour, and I couldn't half enjoy it for wondering every minute, as it changed from one beauty to another, whether he were watching too.

We have tenderly radiant sunsets at home, which I love; but they're not startlingly magnificent as in America, where all things—even cloud effects—are managed on such a sensational scale. I saw some skies to remember, in Newport, though never one like this; but perhaps the magical charm of it was partly dependent on the gleaming river.

When the daylight blue had faded, there was a kind of dusky lull. Then, as if flames leaped up out of the clear water, river and mountains and sky ran gold, reddening slowly till the colour burned deep and vivid as the heart of a rose. From crimson was born violet, soft blue-violet that hung like a robe over the mountains, while the living azure of the river was slashed with silver; and as one gazed and gazed, afraid to turn away, there broke a sudden flood of amethyst light out of the floating haze. It was dazzling for a moment, but before one realised the change the brilliance had been drunk up by purple shadows. The outline of trees and foot-hills melted into the pansy gloom, and at last, with one dying quiver of light all warmth of colour was blotted out. Water and sky paled to a pen-sive grey-blue, and as the French say, "it made night."

There was a tremendous menu for dinner, such as we used to have for breakfast on shipboard, and droves of things whose names I'd never heard before. Just for curiosity, I ordered several of the strangest, and some of

226 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

them were a great success. For instance, there was "suc-cotash," which sounds as if it might be a guttural insult flung at the mouth of one Red Indian Brave by another; but when it was (figuratively speaking) flung at mine by a black waiter, it turned out to be something more in the nature of a compliment. It looked like beryls mixed with pearls, though it was really only green beans stirred up with American corn; and the two got on so well together you felt they had been born for each other.

It's now about two o'clock in the morning, and it seems as if we must have raced across half America, but we have a long, long way to go still, so says the soft brown thing, who looked in on me about an hour ago to ask in a casual way whether, if she should go to Europe to live, she might not be taken for an Italian?

When I was a little girl, and my nurse used to make up tales to put me to sleep at night, I would sometimes get impatient and tell her to "go down into the story and find out what happened next." Just now, I feel as if that is what I should like to do in my future.

XV

ABOUT SEEING CHICAGO

THE first face I saw on the platform when we arrived in Chicago was Mr. Brett's. He was waiting to help me, and looked as fresh as if he hadn't spent eighteen hours in the train. He said I looked fresh, too; but if I did it must have been excitement, as I'd written half the night and dreamed desperately the other half, about Potter Parker—dressed like one of those Red Indians they have for cigar signs in New York—pursuing me with a jewelled tomahawk.

Mr. Brett had insisted on my telegraphing to Sally before we left New York, to say I was coming, and asking her to meet the train, therefore, we were surprised not to find her at the station. I was rather anxious, and so I could see was Mr. Brett. He thought he had better not drive in a cab with me to the friend's house where she was staying, but he told me the name of a hotel where he would go at once, and made me promise that I would send him a line by the cabman to say whether everything was well with me.

"Miss Woodburn probably has a headache, or perhaps is out of town for the day," said he. "It can't be anything else; still, I shall be a little uneasy till I hear. And you know I hold myself absolutely at your service."

"What about your friend whose business you've come to attend to?" I asked. "I mustn't be so selfish as to interfere with that, whatever happens."

"Oh, I can attend to both interests," he assured me,

"without neglecting either. I shan't need to let one interfere with the other. And remember, I won't stir out of my hotel till I've had your note."

Bereft of him, Chicago overawed me, and took my breath away. It is a good thing I saw New York first, for if I'd come straight from England with only memories of peaceful London to support me through the ordeal, I don't know but it might have affected my brain.

For one thing, there was a high wind which seemed to have a fancy for making off with your hat. It was an exciting sort of wind, too, which played with your nerves; but whether it was that, or whether something extraordinary was happening just out of sight round the corner of nearly every street we passed, and all the people we saw were tearing like mad to the spot, I don't know, but anyhow they seemed a good deal agitated, and there were more varieties of startling street noises even than 'n New York. The cable cars were like live, untamed things that scorned to wait the convenience of wretched little human beings. Such women and girls as had performed the feat of clambering on board didn't dream for a moment that the creatures might be induced to stop and let them get down. They simply hurled themselves off as they could, and my heart was in my mouth for them, and for myself, many times while my cab mingled with the surging and apparently uncontrolled traffic.

It was a long drive, though, and as I had time to calm down I saw that numbers of the huge buildings are nobly designed, and very magnificent in decoration, making a splendid effect in spite of their vast size rather than because of it. And such shops, too! They're like the fairy palaces my nurse used to tell me about, as big as whole cities, where you could get anything you wanted just by wishing.

On the way, I made up my mind to ask Sally a number of questions; why they have the curbstones so high in Chicago; why the women, though dressed much the same as in New York, look quite different and have a style of their own, even in their walk; why almost all the men are young; and why, though there is such a network of trams, nearly everybody seems to need a motor car?

I think American girls must be braver than English ones, for where with us, if a girl drives a motor she is so remarkable that her picture is at once put in a newspaper, in the States a girl in a car, in the midst of howling traffic, doesn't even have the air of wanting to scream or faint, but just sits straight up and smiles with her figure looking inexpressibly French; and there are two or three of her in every important street.

There was a wonderful swinging bridge which we had to wait for until it chose to come to us, like the mountain to Mahomet, and presently we trotted into a beautiful Avenue near a startlingly unexpected blue sea which I thought must be a mirage, till the cabman said it was Lake Michigan. But who would have thought of a lake being like that? The only ones I ever saw were pretty little things in parks where you fed swans.

At last we stopped before a large, handsome house, with a lawn round it and no fence. The house was stone in front, but had brick sides which gave it a queer effect, yet somehow didn't spoil it; and wherever there wasn't a porch, it had broken out in bow windows.

I told the cabman to wait, and then ran up the four or five steps to ring the front door bell. In a minute a maid came who would have been very smart-looking if she had only worn a proper cap.

"Is Miss Woodburn stopping here?" I asked.

"No, she isn't," returned the young woman with a glint

230 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

of the eye which seemed to say, she would perish sooner than call anyone "Miss," and I shouldn't wonder if she would have felled me to the earth rather than give me a "ladyship" had it been required of her.

"Are you *sure*?" I persisted, my heart preparing for a plunge bootward.

"I guess so," said the girl with a superior but not ill-natured smile. "She *was* staying with us, but she went day before yesterday. I don't think she'll be back, because she's gone to take care of a friend who's real sick, way back in Ohio somewhere."

"Way back in Ohio somewhere!" The words were like a knell for all my hopes. I didn't know what was to become of me now.

"I am sorry," I said. "Do you know if a telegram came for Miss Woodburn yesterday?"

"Yesindeed," replied the young woman, all in one word, but her face brightened. Suddenly she was looking at me like a long-lost friend. "I guess you're expected. Mrs. Hale, that's the lady of the house here, sent the telegram on, and Miss Woodburn telegraphed back about you. Mrs. Hale went to meet your train, but maybe she didn't recognise you or else she got caught at the bridge. Anyhow she hasn't come back yet. I guess you'd better come in. Your room is all ready for you."

"My room?" I stammered.

"Why—yes, of course. Mrs. Hale expects you to stay with us till you're good and ready to go somewhere else. You'll like her. She's a nice lady, if I do say it myself."

"She's too kind," I exclaimed. "I never heard of such kindness to a stranger."

"Oh, maybe you haven't been in America long," said the kind lady's servant. "I guess it would be just the

same in most any house over here. You come right in, and I'll take you up to your room."

I hadn't thought at first I could like that girl so much, but my heart warmed to her and her mistress, and everything that was hers. Only I couldn't stay. I would have to move on somewhere, like the poor tramps in the Park at home.

"I can't do that, though I'm very grateful indeed to Mrs. Hale," I said. "I—I have other plans. I'll just scribble a little note to tell her so, and thank her, then I must go."

"She'll just never forgive me if I let you," protested the young woman.

I began to be a little afraid that I might be detained by well-meant force; but when I had written a letter to Mrs. Hale, (squeezing Vivace under one arm and sitting at a desk in a bright, charming drawing-room where three Persian cats, six Japanese spaniels and a number of birds played about the floor) I contrived to persuade the hospitable creature that my immediate departure was practically a matter of life or death. Then I threaded my way out of the drawing-room without squashing any of the little tropical, flowerlike things that hopped about and—according to the maid—were worth more than their weight in gold.

I knew I should have loved Mrs. Hale, for her own sake and Sally's and the happy family's in the drawing-room, but I felt I must vanish before she came home, or I should be saddled upon her, and she would feel bound to keep me indefinitely, till Sally returned or I was sent for like a missing parcel by my own people.

So instead of writing my news to Mr. Brett, I went back with it to him, like a bad penny. He must have been surprised when he heard that a lady was waiting in the drawing-room of his hotel, and hurried in to see me sitting there.

232 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

I should have felt ready to die if he had looked bored, but he didn't a bit.

I told him all my adventures, and about the dogs and cats and birds, and then I asked what on earth I should do now. "I suppose I shall have to go back to New York," I said gloomily, "and cable to my brother. I could stop at some *pension* and wait till I heard—a quiet *pension*, Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox wouldn't be likely to know about."

"You alone in a New York boarding house!" exclaimed Mr. Brett. "Never."

"Then could you find me a Chicago one?"

"There'd be nothing to choose between. No, Lady Betty, but I can suggest something better. Only—I don't know how you'll take it. Wouldn't you rather be near Miss Woodburn than anything else, until your future plans are settled?"

"Of course," said I, "but that's impossible now."

"I'm not so sure. I think—in fact I know, where she is. You say Mrs. Hale's maid told you she'd gone to Ohio, to take care of a sick friend. I can tell you where that friend lives, and her name, because I have relatives in the neighbourhood. I don't often go there, but I've heard from them of Miss Woodburn's visits. My cousins have a farm; and I was wondering whether you could content yourself boarding with them for awhile, so near Miss Woodburn you could see her every day?"

"Oh, I should love it," I cried. "But would they have me?"

"They would be happy to have you, I know. The only question is, would *you* be happy? They're simple folk, with simple ways, such as you would expect of my people, Lady Betty; but they've hearts of gold."

"Like yours," I thought; but I didn't say it. I said

instead that I was fond of simple ways. And I asked where the place was, and if it was far off?

"It will take us about twelve hours to get there," he answered.

"Us?" I echoed. "Why, you can't——"

"I can if you'll let me," said, he, growing red. "I've finished my business in Chicago, already, and——"

"What, while I was away?"

"It was a short affair, though important."

"But I thought you weren't going to leave the hotel till I wrote?"

"I didn't need to. My friend came to me, and we fixed up everything between us in a few minutes. Now, I'm free again; and my idea in any case was to drop in on my Ohio cousins. You see, twelve hours' travelling is nothing to us Americans, and they wouldn't like it if I didn't just say 'how do you do,' when I'm so near."

"Oh, well, if that's really true, and you aren't doing it only to help me," said I, with a sigh of relief. "I was afraid you were. I shouldn't mind the journey a bit if you were with me; but I do hope we'll have the same kind of ticket this time. Do get mine like yours, won't you?"

His eyes had a beautiful expression in them as he thanked me, and said he would do the best he could; only I couldn't exactly make it out. I hoped it wasn't pity, but I'm afraid it may have been, as I must have seemed rather forlorn, depending so entirely upon him.

"The best train to take would be this evening," he went on. "That would give my cousins, Mr. and Mrs. Trowbridge, plenty of time to get ready for you too, for I'll wire them that you're coming. But how could you pass the day? Would you—let me show you the sights of Chicago?"

"*Would I?* It would be the best of fun. Oh, I *am* glad I came, after all."

"Then that's settled. I'll send off that telegram and one or two others, and come back with an automobile. Don't look like that, please, Lady Betty. It isn't going to cost me all I've got to hire one. They're cheap here; besides I know a man who will give me one for the day, for next to nothing. And I'll bring you one of those silk things with tale windows to wear over your head and face, so no one will see that Lady Betty Bulkeley is 'doing' Chicago to-day."

"I don't know a soul here," said I. "And anyway I wouldn't be ashamed. I shall be doing no wrong."

"Of course not, or I hope I wouldn't have proposed it," said Mr. Brett.

Then he went away, and in about half an hour he was back with the promised motor hood and a dust coat, both of which he said were thrown in with the car for anyone who hired it, if desired.

I was as pleased as Punch. As Caro Pitchley said when she was engaged, I felt I was "going to have *the* time of my life." And it *was* fun. I shall never forget that day of mine in Chicago with Mr. Brett, if I live to be a hundred.

The only sight I did not want to see was the poor pigs walking into a trough wagging their tails and coming out of another one eventually as a string of sausages or something. But we didn't miss any of the other sights, and there were enough to last us from morning till evening without stopping once. We bowled along wide boulevards, and saw Lincoln Park, and the Midway and Jackson Park. We had things to eat on the lake shore near a pier, and afterwards we had ice cream in the old German Building of the World's Fair. There were some beautiful la-

goons, and Mr. Brett rowed me about in a boat. I should have liked to stop there for hours, but there were too many other things to do. We had to see Sans Souci, a sort of Chicago Coney Island, which was a tremendous lark, with Helter Skelters, and Air Ships, and a Laughing Gallery and a trip to Hades. I wouldn't miss anything, and Mr. Brett must have found me a handful, I'm afraid, though I do think he enjoyed it almost as much as I did. Usually he is rather grave, but before half the day was gone he was like a boy. We talked together as if we had been friends for years and told each other anecdotes of our past lives. He didn't care about talking of himself, but I made him by asking questions, and refusing to tell things about myself unless he would. I found it a great deal more interesting to listen to such stories than to hear about the history of Chicago, and he has had the most extraordinarily interesting life. His mother died when he was a little boy, and he had a horrid stepmother who was so cruel that he ran away from home and had all sorts of adventures at the age when the boys I know at home would be just beginning to look forward to Eton. I had to draw the details from him, and I felt so sorry for all the poor fellow had gone through that I longed with my whole heart to do something to make up to him for his past hardships. But I haven't thought of anything yet that a girl could do, which would be really useful.

The best fun of all was the Chinese restaurant where we had dinner. It's in a queer street where there are some famous pawn shops, it seems, and I wanted to go into them, but Mr. Brett wouldn't take me. To get to the restaurant you go up a long flight of marble stairs, with two grinning Chinese devil-heads, like watch dogs, on the wall at the top.

Nothing could be more modern and Western than the Chicago surging and roaring outside. But as you pass

236 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

the guardian devils and cross the threshold of that restaurant you turn your back on the present and find yourself in the Far East. I liked it better than Mrs. Ess Kay's gorgeous Aladdin's Cave, for there's nothing imitation or stagey about this place. There's real lacquer, and real silver and gold on the strange partitions; real Chinese mural paintings; real Chinese lamps swinging from the ceilings; real ebony stools to sit on at the inlaid octagon tables, and real ebony chopsticks to eat with if you choose, instead of commonplace knives and forks.

Of course we did choose; I would be ashamed to bow to myself in the looking glass if we hadn't; and we pretended that we were making an actual tour in China as we ate strange yet delicious food such as my wildest imagination could not have conjured. I was a great princess, and Mr. Brett was my Chief Grand Marshal. He wanted to be my courier, but I wouldn't have him for anything so ignominious. I reminded him that I had counselled ambition, and I gave him for a decoration a little steel and paste button which just then came off my grey bolero where it didn't show much. He immediately pinned it under the lapel of his coat, and looked suddenly quite solemn as he said he would keep it always.

We had Bird's Nest Bud-ball Yet-bean War; and Shark's Fin, Loung-fong Chea; and Duck, Gold-silver Tone Arp; eggs with Shrimp Yook; cake called Rose Sue; and Ting Moy, which was a Canton preserve; and various other things that I picked out from the names Mr. Brett read me from the funny yellow menu card. Afterwards we had Head-loo-hom tea in beautiful little cups without handles, much prettier than those which Mother keeps in a cabinet in the room that smells of camphor from Mohunsleigh's polar bear. I was horrified when the bill came, to see that it was about half a yard long, and that

Mr. Brett had to pay with a number of expensive-looking greenback things, but he laughed when he saw my frightened face, and said the dinner didn't really cost all that, he only wanted change. I begged him to let me go halves with everything, as I'd invited myself, in a way, but he told me I didn't understand American customs yet, and asked if I had the heart to spoil the happiest day of his life?

I couldn't resist telling him it was the happiest of mine, too—that I had never amused myself half as well.

"Not even in Newport?" said he.

"Not even in Newport," I repeated. "It was delightful there, and everybody was kind and charming to me, but—you see I had no *real* friends, like you, to go about with; and that makes the greatest difference, doesn't it?"

His eyes lit up again at that, and I could see the blood mounting under his brown skin.

"All the difference in the world," he answered in a low voice. Then he looked as if he were going to say something else, but shut his lips tight together and didn't. One wouldn't dare speak out the truth like this, to a rich man one might be supposed to be trying to marry; I remember enough of what Mother and Vic have told me about proper behaviour in a *débutante*, to know that. But I've never wanted to talk in such a way to any man except Mr. Brett, which is lucky, as he always understands me; and that's one reason why it's pleasanter to be with him than any other person I've ever met yet.

XVI

ABOUT THE VALLEY FARM

AFTER all, Mr. Brett's ticket was different from mine again, but I suppose he couldn't arrange to have the same kind and see something of me on the journey, because, as I'd asked him, he would have done it if possible. We went back part of the way we had come the night before, in the same grand kind of train, as far as Cleveland, which we reached in the morning, quite early. We got out there, for no fine trains like that stop at the village near which Mr. Brett's cousins live, and he said the best thing we could do would be to drive to the farm in a motor car. It was about forty miles away, but with a good car which he could easily get, we wouldn't be more than two hours, allowing for bad roads. If we didn't take a motor, we should have to wait half the morning for a slow train, and then have a drive at the end, of six or seven miles in some kind of a country conveyance.

When I hesitated, thinking of expense, Mr. Brett explained that among his many other occupations, he had once acted as a chauffeur, therefore, knowing the tricks of the trade and being a sort of professional himself, he could always hire a motor at a nominal price. This settled my doubts. We drove in a cab to a hotel, where he left me, with Vivace, while he went to search for a car. Presently he came back with a smart grey thing which matched my clothes; and not only was there a grey chauffeur to go with it, but a grey holland coat for me,

and a grey silk hood with a lace curtain. I do think they do things well in America.

Mr. Brett wanted to know if I would like a short run about Cleveland before starting, so I said yes, as I love seeing new things; and it was beautiful. I don't remember learning Cleveland on the map of the States when I did geography, so I hadn't realised that it could be important. But Bournemouth and Folkeston and Harrogate rolled into one wouldn't fill it, and Cleveland is a great deal grander than any of them. Even Bellevue Avenue in Newport is hardly handsomer than Euclid; but what an odd name to give a street! But to me the names of streets in America don't sound as interesting and individual as ours do.

I looked forward to seeing the country between Cleveland and Aristo (which is the name of the town nearest to the Valley Farm) because except for the drives I had had near Newport, I knew nothing at all of the real country in America. I had an idea that we should pass some fine country houses and see a number of pretty little nestling villages.

The name of Aristo was rather impressive and classical sounding, I thought, and I had visions of meeting on the way pretty girls driving or riding, and good-looking, well-groomed men such as I had met always in the country round Newport. But as we went on and on, I was disappointed. The scenery itself was lovely, rich, and peaceful, with groves of maple trees which would have been quite new to me if I hadn't seen a few in the East; but the villages were blots rather than beauty spots, and we saw only peasants and farm people.

Mr. Brett was driving the car with me beside him, while the chauffeur sat behind, and I made some such remark to him before I stopped to remember that his relatives

were farm people. I could have bitten my tongue then, but he didn't seem to be offended.

"Outside the towns in the West there are few of what *you* would call gentlefolk," said he, with just the faintest emphasis of good-natured scorn for English prejudice; "nor are there any 'country houses' as you understand the name in England. Here people live in the country to till the land and to live by tilling it; yet they don't call themselves 'peasants,' either. It isn't that they're snobbish and want to seem to be what they are not, don't think that for a moment. But they—well, I won't try to describe them. Many people from the Old World would never understand what they really are, or their point of view; but you will, Lady Betty. You are quick, and sympathetic, and intelligent; and when I ask you to define for me the difference between the farmers of Ohio, as typified by my cousins and their neighbours in Summer County, I shall be surprised if you don't exactly hit the nail on the head. They'll surprise you a little at first, I warn you, and for about ten minutes maybe you won't know what to make of them. But I count on you to see the point in spite of all your traditions."

"What have my traditions got to do with it?" I asked.

"Wait and see."

I laughed. "Well, I only wish I knew what my traditions are," said I. "I suppose I ought to know, but I don't think I do."

"You may feel them prickling up and down your spine for a bit, while you're getting used to a new order of things at the Valley Farm," answered Mr. Brett. "And yet I don't know. I shall be enormously interested in watching the effect upon you, before I—have to say good-bye."

I forgot everything else he had been saying when I heard that last sentence.

"Will you have to say good-bye soon?" I asked in a crestfallen voice.

He didn't speak for a minute, perhaps on account of a series of bumps in the road which, though so pretty, was much worse for driving than any I have seen at home. I don't believe Englishmen would stand it. They would keep writing to *The Times* and signing their letters "Motorist," or "Sportsman," or "Mother of Ten Cyclists," till somebody was forced to do something.

At last he said, "To tell you the truth, Lady Betty, I should like to stop and pay my cousins a little visit, but—I don't know if I have a right to."

"Oh, why not?" I asked. "Wouldn't they be delighted to keep you?"

"Perhaps. I hope so. But what about you?"

"If it depended one bit on me, you'd make a *long* visit."

"Wouldn't you really mind seeing me hanging around—sometimes? Just at meals, you know—or to take you a drive once in awhile?"

I looked at him merrily through my tale window, for I felt happy and light-hearted, and the world seemed such a very nice place to live in at that moment.

"Do you truly need to have me answer that question?" I asked. "If you do, we can't be real friends as I thought, after all."

"You say that because you are kind—too kind to have reflected enough, perhaps. An accident—the happiest accident in the world for me—has given me a chance to see something of you, Lady Betty; but do you understand that only by an accident could a rough fellow like me have any place at all in your life, no matter how small

or temporary? I don't want to take advantage of that sweet kindness of yours, which is partly all your own, and partly the essence of your youth and innocence."

"Now you are making me very cross," said I. "I won't hear you talk so. You may laugh at me, because we've known each other such a short time, but really and truly you are the best friend I've ever had. I wouldn't lose you for anyone or anything in the world, and I don't mean to, unless you get tired of me—so, there!"

"Tired of you! Good heavens, I tired of you!"

"Very well, then," said I flippantly, "so far as I'm concerned you needn't say 'good-bye' to the Valley Farm till you feel the first symptoms coming on."

"Lady Betty," remarked Mr. Brett, "I wonder if there's another girl like you in the world?"

"According to my Mother, there isn't another so vexing," I replied.

We both laughed; and then he suddenly said, "Here is Aristo."

I stared about wildly. "Where, where?" I asked.

He laughed a great deal more. "Why, you're looking right at the postoffice and the grocery and drygoods store."

Sure enough, there was a brown wooden building at the top of a dusty hill we were just climbing; but there was nothing else anywhere, except a clear brown creek, and some sweet-smelling meadows with a white horse gazing in a bored way over rather a queer fence, and some cows asleep under a clump of maple trees on our side of a young birch grove.

"Where's the rest of it?" I went on. "Where are the other shops, and the houses, and the people?"

"Oh, the other shops and the houses aren't built yet, but they may be any time; and then the people will come.

But the fact that they haven't come yet doesn't prevent this from being Aristo. The slow trains from Cleveland stop just behind that hill, several times a day, which is very convenient for the farmers in the neighbourhood, otherwise they would have to go all the way to Arcona, twelve miles away. But you mustn't think this is the only place you will have to do your shopping when you're at the Valley Farm. Wait till you see Hermann's Corners. There's a great Emporium there, and you'll ruffle the feelings of half the ladies of Summer County if you don't fall in love with it, and its proprietor, Whit Walker. Promise you'll let me be the first one to introduce you to both? "

I promised, and wanted to be prepared for what I must expect to find; but Mr. Brett would tell me nothing. He said that neither the great Whit Walker nor Hermann's Corners Emporium could possibly be described for the comprehension of a foreigner.

We were in a sweet and gracious country now. It looked as if Mother Nature would never allow any of her children who obeyed her, to be poor or unhappy here. As we whizzed along the up and down road between billowing meadows of grain, we could see here and there a farm house showing between trees, or peering over the brow of a rounded hill; but there was none where I longed to stop until we came in sight of a dear, old, red-brick house—*really* old, not what some Americans call old. It was set back several hundred yards from the road, and an avenue of magnificent maples—each one a great green temple—led up to the comfortable, rose-draped porch which sheltered the door. There was an old-fashioned garden on one side, with a running flame of hollyhocks hemming it in; the background was a dark green oak and maple grove; and in a clover meadow beyond the garden was a colony of

beehives. It looked an ideal, storybook place, and I wished it might be the Valley Farm, but thought such a thing too good to be true. When one is going to stop at a house one has never seen, as Vic says, it usually turns out to be the one of all others you like least.

So I was delighted when we turned in at the open gate with its guardian apple tree on either side. We sailed up the avenue under the maples, but instead of making for the front entrance, turned off into a farm road which led round the side of the house, and the tooting of our horn brought three women smiling and waving to a door under a long, narrow verandah before we stopped.

One was a tall, thin, middle-aged woman, with grey-brown hair pulled away from her forehead and done in a knob at the back of her head. Her skin was sunburned; she wore a black and white print frock, without so much as a ruffle or tuck, and her sleeves were rolled up over her sun-browned arms above the elbow; she had no real pretensions to being pretty, and yet, somehow, she was one of the nicest-looking women I ever saw. She had the sort of expression in her eyes, and in her smile, you would like your mother to have, if you could have had your mother made to order exactly according to your own ideas.

On her right stood a very pretty girl with a dazzling white complexion, all the whiter for a gold-powder of freckles; black eyes rather deep set, dimples, and a quantity of curly, bright-red hair wound in a crown of braids round her head. She was in print, too, but it was blue, and very becoming.

On the tall woman's left was another girl, also pretty, though in a florid way, with great blue eyes, a full mouth, and a mouse-coloured fringe down to her eyebrows. She was more elaborately dressed than the others, with a lot of coarse lace on her blouse, and a pink skirt. But she

hadn't the look of simple refinement which the first two had in spite of their plain clothes and rolled-up sleeves. All three waved something excitedly. One had a huge kitchen spoon, another a book, and the third a towel.

"Howdy, Cousin Jim!" cried the nice woman with the expression, as Mr. Brett stopped the car in front of the door. "We're mighty glad to see you again. This is the young Lady Bulkeley, isn't it? We're mighty glad to see her, too, and we're going to try to make her as happy as we can."

"I knew you would, Cousin Fanny, or I wouldn't have brought her to you," said Mr. Brett, jumping out and helping me down. "But she's Lady Betty."

"I thought that would be a little too familiar to begin with," said the dear woman, with a perfectly angelic smile, and a pleasant American accent with rather more roll of the "r" than I'd heard in the East. "But you shall be called just what you like best, my dear."

"Shall I? Then I should like you to call me Betty," said I, shaking hands hard with Mr. Brett's Cousin Fanny, and my heart warming to her for her own sake as well as his. There was a good smell about her of linen dried on the grass and of freshly-baked cake. I can never smell those smells, I know, without remembering her.

She smiled, and pressed my hand. "Why, you are just like an American girl, my dear," she exclaimed. "Not a bit stiff and English like we supposed you would be. We all thought we were going to be afraid of you, but I guess we won't, will we, Patty and Ide?"

I saw that I was expected to take this as an introduction. I smiled and bowed to the two girls, and when they put out their hands I put mine out too. They didn't lift my hand up high to shake, as people do at home a little, and as they do in New York and Newport a great deal

more, but just thumped it up and down cordially in about the longitude of their waists.

"I'm very happy to know you," said Patty, the pretty, red-haired one.

"How *do* you do?" enquired Ide, the one with the fringe.

I fancied that they must both be Mrs. Trowbridge's daughters, but she continued the ceremony of presentation by saying:

"Patty is Miss Pinkerton; and Ide is Miss Jay. They generally stay with Mr. Trowbridge and me pretty nearly all the year round. Patty takes music lessons in Arcona twice a week, and keeps up her other studies, and Ide helps me look after the house and the milk. I should have hard work to get along without either one of them, it seems to me; and I expect I shall be feeling just the same way about you before you leave us. Here comes Mr. Trowbridge, now. See, Cousin Jim, here comes your Cousin Hezekiah. He's been hiving a swarm of bees; that's why he's got that mosquito net veil around his hat. Something like your automobile one, Lady Betty."

A man of fifty or more, in white duck trousers and a bluish shirt with a turned-down collar a little open at the neck, was coming towards the house from the direction of the beehive colony. He had on no coat; in fact, I think a grey linen thing hanging over a wooden rocking-chair on the verandah must have been his. His battered straw hat, with the "mosquito-net veil" which Mrs. Trowbridge had mentioned, was on the back of his head, and when he saw us, he snatched it off and waved it as his wife had waved her spoon and Ide her towel. From a distance he looked just an ordinary farmer, but when he came near enough for me to make out his features I saw that he was very far from ordinary. He had a splendid head, the

head of a statesman, and his face was clear and intellectual, with keen, kind eyes. It had a remarkable resemblance to lots of pictures I had seen since coming to the States, of the Father of his Country, General Washington.

He shook hands, too, with me and Mr. Brett, but first he wiped some honey from his fingers, on the side of his trousers. As he did it, it was a dignified and laudable act. There was no reason why he should have been glad to see me, a perfect stranger, but he seemed to be so honestly pleased that it warmed my heart, and made me feel already at home in the sweet, old, red-brick farmhouse, which reminded me, in its soft colours, of a great bunch of wall flowers.

"I reckon we're going to be real good friends," said he. "If we'd known just how you was coming, Jim, I'd have liked to meet you and her little ladyship—the first ladyship we've had in these parts. You didn't give us any idea, though, and now I see why. But look here, Mother, you might have had the front door open. I'm afraid the young lady from England will think we're mighty informal."

"I shouldn't wonder if that's just about what she'll like to think, Father," said Mrs. Trowbridge, with her smile that was so motherly and friendly at the same time. "Miss Woodburn would have been over to see you if she could; she was just ready to jump for joy when Patty ran across to tell her you were coming; but Mis' Randal is pretty sick, and Sally felt she couldn't leave her yet awhile. So she sent you her love, and she'll be along the minute she can git away."

Just for an instant it struck me as odd to hear this simple farm woman in her straight print calmly calling my charming, dainty friend "Sally," as if there could be no shadow of doubt in anyone's mind of their perfect

248 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

social equality. But in another second I could have boxed my own ears for my denseness and snobbish stupidity. Already—even in these few minutes—I was beginning faintly to understand some of the “points” at which Mr. Brett had hinted.

“Maybe you’d like to go and have a look at your room,” went on Mrs. Trowbridge. “Patty and Ide have picked you some flowers, and I hope you’ll find everything right——”

“Oh, Mis’ Trowbridge, do let me take her,” exclaimed Patty.

“Me too!” cried Ide.

“They’re just like children. I guess we’ll have to humour them this once,” laughed Mr. Brett’s Cousin Fanny.

When I smiled at Patty, she cuddled her arm round me, and then Ide promptly did the same. Thus interlaced, the procession moved into the house.

The door of the verandah opens into a cosy sitting-room. There is nothing which you could point out as pretty in the furnishing, and decoration there is none; but the room has a delicious, welcoming look, and makes you want to live in it.

There is the queerest carpet on the floor, with irregular stripes of different colours mingling indistinctly with the grey groundwork, and all has faded into a pleasant indefiniteness of tint. There’s a high-backed sofa upholstered with black horse-hair, and the springs have evidently been pressed by generations of Trowbridges who have been born, and reared, and died in the old Valley Farmhouse. The big, ugly clock, too, with the pendulum showing through a wreath of flowers on its glass door, has attained the dignity of age, and earned a right to its place on the crowded mantelpiece by ticking out the years

for these same generations. There are patchwork cushions and others embroidered with worsted and beads, on the sofa and in the great horse-hair-covered armchair, and the two or three hospitable-looking chairs with rockers. Curious shells, and wax flowers under a glass case, adorn a carved wooden bracket; and there are family portraits, enlarged in crayons from old photographs, hanging on the quaintly-papered wall. Between two windows stands a "secretary bookcase," with a propped-up shelf spread with writing materials and files of paper. In the middle of the room is a round table with a homemade fancy-work cover, scarcely showing under its great bowl of mixed country flowers, and its neat piles of books and magazines. As I went in, the sun blinds were bowed for the summer heat, and the room was filled with a cool, sea-green light.

Suddenly I thought of Mrs. Ess Kay's magnificent palace in New York, with its fountain court and splendid drawing rooms. I saw her "little cottage" at Newport, and the other "cottages" and castles I had grown accustomed to there; but somehow the startling contrast between these pictures and this only made me more content with my present surroundings.

"What a nice room!" I exclaimed to the girls, pausing for a glance around.

They looked surprised.

"Do you think so?" asked Patty. "We were afraid maybe you wouldn't. The things you're used to must be a good deal handsomer. Everything's so old here."

"I love old things," said I. "Our house at home is very old, and I wouldn't have anything changed for worlds, even if it were to be made better."

"Why, that's kind of the way I feel, too!" exclaimed Patty, giving my waist a sympathetic squeeze. "I like this living-room. But Ide doesn't admire it a little bit."

250 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

"If I was Mis' Trowbridge I'd always sit in the parlour," said Ide, "instead of keeping it shut up, except for best, just because Mr. Trowbridge's ma did before her. It's a *real* pretty room. There's a Brussels carpet with roses on the floor, and a handsome suite of red velvet furniture, and a piano, and a marble table. Patty practises her music there, but aside from that none of us see the room, only to sweep and dust, till Thanksgiving and Christmas, when the relations come, or when Mis' Trowbridge has company to tea in winter. Would you like to see it? You can if you want."

I thanked her, but thought we had better put off the treat until another time, as we were on our way to my room. I was wondering how to define the difference between Patty and Ide. I saw that it was very marked, yet I didn't quite understand. The two girls appeared to be on the same footing in the house, I said to myself, but Ide was far more showy than Patty, seeming to put herself forward, as if she were afraid of not being noticed, and then she was dressed so much more elaborately. Perhaps, I thought, Patty was poor, and in a more dependent position than Ide.

The stairway, very steep and narrow, leads straight up from the "living-room," which is apparently in the centre of the house and fills the place of a hall. There are no balusters, but a whitewashed wall on either side, and only one person can go up at a time. At the top is a landing, with a bare, painted floor, and doors opening from it. One of the doors is mine; and as they showed me in I could see that Patty and Ide both waited breathlessly for my verdict, their faces looking quite strained and anxious until I exclaimed:

"How fresh and pretty it is here!"

I meant it, too. It is a dear room, with something

pathetic about its simple sweetness, and the kind thought to give me pleasure which shows in every little innocent detail. The floor is covered with a white straw matting, and there are no two pieces of furniture that match. There's a wide, wooden bed of no particular period that I can recognise, yet with an air of being old-fashioned, and there are stiff, square shams to hide the pillows and turn down over the top of the sheet, with fluted frills round the edges. There's a thing covered with a veneer of mahogany, which I should call a chest of drawers, if Patty and Ide hadn't mentioned it as a "bureau." A mirror divided into two halves hangs over it, with a white crocheted cover to protect the gilt frame from flies; there's a crocheted pin-cushion, too; and in vases painted by home talent bloom the sweetest grass-pinks I ever smelled. There are little blue summer houses with pink children and brown dogs in them, matched all wrong at the edges, on the wall paper; there is a wash-handstand and a table with a white cover and more flowers; and that's all except a basket rocking-chair and some hanging shelves; but the white muslin curtains are tied with blue ribbons, and there's a hand-braided rug before the bed, and there are little lace mats under the vases. The scent of dried rose leaves and lavender mingles with the perfume of the pinks; and some of the summer house pagodas on the wall are hidden with old-fashioned steel engravings and photographs in home-made frames.

I didn't stop to examine the pictures at first, but after Patty and Ide had tripped away ("to see about my dinner," they said) I was attracted by a faded cabinet photograph framed with shells. It was a full length figure of a young man on horseback. He was dressed something like those splendid cowboys they took me to see at Earls-court when I was a little girl, and the face was Mr.

Brett's. It was so handsome and dashing I could hardly stop staring at it while I washed off the dust of motoring. Evidently the photograph in its frame has been on the wall a long time. I am glad they happened to put it in what they call the "spare room," so I can look at it whenever I like without anyone noticing.

dly
or-
een
put
at

XVII

ABOUT COWS AND NATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

WHEN I went downstairs, dinner was ready in a cool, shady dining-room, with a bare floor painted brown, and a long table down the middle. It wasn't quite two o'clock, but it turned out that the family had had their dinner at noon exactly, and this was a meal only for Mr. Brett and me, with Patty and Ide to bring us things from the kitchen and wait upon us, while Mrs. Trowbridge flitted in smiling from time to time, to ask how we were "getting along." It was she who was cooking for us, and I felt quite distressed at the trouble I was giving, on such a hot day, too, but she said she was enjoying it.

It was a very funny dinner, according to my ideas, for I never had a meal a bit like it at home, even when I was small and dined in the daytime with the governess. But it was tremendously good, though none of the things went together properly. We had delicious young chicken—quite babies they were, poor dears—fried with cream; and wreathed all round our plates in a semicircle were a quantity of tiny dishes. Each one had a big dab of something different in it; mashed potatoes, succotash, green peas, a kind of vegetable marrow to which they gave the unworthy name of "squash," raw tomatoes, sweet green pickles, preserved strawberries, and goodness knows what all besides; while, if we stopped eating to breathe or speak, Patty flew in with a plate of freshly-made things



MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART

(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)



1.50

1.56

1.63

1.75

1.80

1.90

2.00

2.24

2.50

2.81

3.15

3.60

4.00

4.50

5.00

5.62

6.30

7.12

8.00

9.00

10.00

11.18

12.50

14.12

16.00

18.18

20.63

23.44

26.67

30.25

34.28

38.75

43.75

49.25

55.38

62.12

69.50

77.63

86.56

96.38

107.12

118.88

131.67

145.50

160.38

176.38

193.50

211.88

231.50

252.38

274.50

298.88

325.50

354.38

385.50

419.88

457.50

498.38

542.50

590.88

643.50

700.38

761.50

827.88

899.50

976.38

1059.50

1148.88

1244.50

1347.38

1457.50

1575.88

1701.50

1835.38

1977.50

2128.88

2289.50

2459.38

2638.50

2827.88

3027.50

3238.38

3459.50

3691.88

3935.50

4191.38

4459.50

4740.88

5035.50

5344.38

5667.50

6005.88

6359.50

6729.38

7115.50

7518.88

7939.50

8378.38

8835.50

9311.88

9807.50

10323.38

10859.50

11416.88

12005.50

12626.38

13279.50

13965.88

14685.50

15439.38

16227.50

17050.88

17909.50

18803.38

19743.50

20730.88

21765.50

22848.38

23979.50

25159.88

26389.50

27669.38

29000.50

30383.88

31819.50

33308.38

34850.50

36446.88

38097.50

39803.38

41565.50

43383.88

45258.50

47190.38

49179.50

51226.88

53333.50

55499.38

57725.50

59913.88

62165.50

64481.38

66862.50

69309.88

71823.50

74404.38

77053.50

79771.88

82559.50

85417.38

88345.50

91344.88

94415.50

97558.38

100773.50

104061.88

107433.50

110889.38

114429.50

118054.88

121765.50

125562.38

129445.50

133415.88

137473.50

141619.38

145853.50

150176.88

154589.50

159091.38

163683.50

168365.88

173138.50

178001.38

182954.50

187997.88

193131.50

198355.38

203669.50

209073.88

214568.50

220154.38

225831.50

231599.88

237459.50

243410.38

249452.50

255585.88

261810.50

268127.38

274535.50

281034.88

287625.50

294307.38

301080.50

307945.88

314903.50

321953.38

329095.50

336330.88

343659.50

351081.38

358596.50

366205.88

373909.50

381707.38

389600.50

397588.88

405672.50

413852.38

422128.50

430500.88

438969.50

447534.38

456195.50

464953.88

473808.50

482760.38

491809.50

500956.88

510202.50

519546.38

528988.50

538529.88

548169.50

557908.38

567746.50

577683.88

587720.50

597857.38

608094.50

618431.88

628869.50

639407.38

650045.50

660783.88

671622.50

682561.38

693600.50

704739.88

715979.50

727319.38

738759.50

750299.88

761940.50

773681.38

785522.50

797463.88

809505.50

821647.38

833889.50

846231.88

858673.50

871215.38

883857.50

896599.88

909442.50

922385.38

935427.50

948569.88

961812.50

975155.38

988597.50

1002139.88

1015782.50

1029525.38

1043367.50

1057309.88

1071352.50

1085495.38

1099737.50

1114079.88

1128522.50

1143065.38

1157707.50

1172449.88

1187292.50

1202235.38

1217277.50

1232419.88

1247662.50

1263005.38

1278447.50

1

of the most heavenly nature, called corn fritters. Mrs. Trowbridge beamed all over when I said I should like to live on them for a month. To drink we had tumblers of iced tea, and there was raspberry vinegar, too, which we were supposed to swallow with our dinner; and afterwards there was hot apple pie, with custard and slabs of cheese to eat at the same time.

We were obliged to eat a good deal of everything, otherwise Mrs. Trowbridge would have felt hurt, and I felt sleepy when we had finished, but I refused to go and lie down to rest, as they wanted me to, it seemed such a waste of time. At last Mr. Trowbridge offered to show "Cousin Jim" round the farm, and maybe I looked wistful, for when they found that I was determined not to take a nap, they asked if I would go with them.

Mr. Trowbridge had on a linen coat now, a long, yellow one, which I should laugh at if I saw it on the stage in a play, but it suited him, and he looked quite impressive in it. He fanned himself with a large straw hat, without any ribbon, and talked splendidly to us, as we three walked together under the trees.

If any English person should write a novel, and make a farmer in it talk like Mr. Trowbridge, everyone who read the book would say he was impossible. His way of speaking was a little slipshod, sometimes (though not a bit more than ours when we drop our "g's" and things like that, only more guileless sounding); but without seeming a bit as if he wanted to show off what he knew—which is so boring—he quoted Shakespeare, and Wordsworth, and Tennyson; and in mentioning his work at the hives in the morning, asked if we had read Mæterlinck's "Life of the Bee." From that he fell to discussing other things of Mæterlinck's with Mr. Brett, and incidentally talked of Ibsen. There wasn't the least affecta-

tion about it all. The quotations and allusions he made were mixed up incidentally with conversation about the beauty of the country, and life on a farm. He was interested in the subjects, and took it for granted that we were, so he chatted about things he cared for, modestly and happily.

By and by he left us alone for a few minutes, while he went to speak to a man who works on the farm. He was going to show us the maple sugar camp when he came back, and we sat on a felled oak and waited, with a smell of clover coming to us on the warm breeze, and the "tinkle, tankle" of cow-bells in the distance.

"What an extraordinary man!" I said to Mr. Brett.

"You mean because he's a farmer," said he, his eyes laughing.

"Well—I suppose I do. But then, of course, he's a gentleman farmer, not an ordinary one at all."

"He's a gentleman in the way that all the good people in the country round are gentlefolk, because they're self-respecting and kind-hearted and intelligent. But he comes of generations of workers. They make no pretensions to blue blood, though perhaps they may have some in their veins, and don't think themselves superior socially to their own farm hands—like that one over there. Nor do they consider themselves inferior to anybody. Not that they would think of *asserting* their claims to equality with your friend Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox, for instance. They simply take it for granted that they are the equals of any other American, or for the matter of that, persons of any foreign nations. You will perhaps hear them talking about your king and queen as 'Edward' and 'Alexandra'; but they won't mean the slightest disrespect."

"You needn't be afraid I shall misunderstand anything

they may do or say," said I. "My ideas about them are beginning to crystallise already, as you thought they would. But I'm wondering at them all, still. They're so utterly new to me, so absolutely different from any types we have or could have at home."

"What would your mother the Duchess think of them—now, honour bright? Don't dream you'll hurt my feelings because they're my cousins and we come of the same stock."

I thought for a minute, and then I said:

"Mother would begin to patronise them graciously at first, as if they could be classified with our farmers—I mean, the peasant ones, not the younger-son or poor-gentleman kind. When she found she couldn't, she would be inclined to resent it. Then, at last, when a dim, puzzled inkling of the truth came into her head, and she found out that they knew as much as she about books and politics and all sorts of things—oh, I can hardly fancy exactly what she would feel; but I'd trust Mr. and Mrs. Trowbridge or anyone like them not to appear at a disadvantage with her, whatever she did with them. They wouldn't have self-consciousness enough to be overawed by her, though she can be so dreadfully alarming. Why, Mr. Brett, in a way I believe they're like *Us*—more like us, really, deep down and far back, than a good many enormously rich people I met at Newport, who think no end of themselves and live in palaces, and know Royalties abroad. Just as I said once to Sally—Miss Woodburn—we take ourselves for granted, and then don't make any more fuss or bother about our manners or whether we're going to do the right thing or not. But a few of the people even in your Four Hundred don't seem quite easy in their minds about themselves. I've never seen anything in big houses at home, where I've been with Mother or

Vic, to come near the luxury of theirs, yet several I've met can't seem to relax and look thoroughly comfortable, as if they really liked it. They don't loll about as we do; they only pretend to loll, because it's in their part in the play they're acting—oh, such a smart, society kind of play, with lots of changes of dress and scene in every act. They build castles because it's the smartest thing they can do, and because grand people always did it a long time ago. Of course, in old times you had to live in them and couldn't have nice seaside cottages with balconies, because if you did your enemies shot off your head, or poured boiling oil on you; but nowadays they merely say horrid things behind your back, and it's just play-acting to build new ones. People talk about a man being 'worth' so many millions, as if it didn't matter what else he's worth, and they seem to be worrying a lot about themselves. Now, I can't imagine your cousins doing that. They just take themselves for granted, as we do in England. Their behaviour is like the air they breathe, and as much a part of themselves as that air is when it's in their lungs. There's a kind of invisible bond between our kind of people at home and people like these, I think, if you come to study it. Partly, it's from having all one's natural interests in the country, maybe, and not just going into the country from a town to play. They are real. There's nothing artificial about them."

"You've got hold of things even sooner than I thought you would, Lady Betty," said Mr. Brett, when I stopped, horrified at myself for my long harangue, in which I'd been thinking out things as I went on. "But all the same, though these new types and this pleasant Ohio farm interest you now, you know you'd rather die than be doomed to live among such people and in such a place."

"Perhaps I should be bored after a while, but I don't

feel now as if I should. I know I could be happy if I had people with me whom I loved."

"But could you love anyone who——"

"Well, I've got rid of that fellow," said Mr. Trowbridge cheerfully. "Now we'll have a look around the camp and I'll show you how we tap the maple trees for the sap; then afterwards we'll go into the sugar house where we boil it down and make the maple syrup."

We'd been talking so earnestly that we hadn't heard him come up, and I felt quite dazed for a minute.

He explained everything to us, or rather to me, for Mr. Brett knew all about it beforehand. Then we had a long walk over the hills, which are billowy and wooded, like Surrey, and when we came back Mr. Trowbridge took me to the beehives to get some honey and show me what a queen bee is like. He gave me a hat with a mosquito-net veil and put on one himself. Then he opened a hive, and when I wasn't a bit nervous, because I trusted him, he said, "I tell you what it is, Lady Betty, you're a trump. I shouldn't be surprised if there isn't something in blood after all."

I was pleased, for I don't think that he or any of the others at the Valley Farm are the kind to say nice things to you unless they really mean them.

After we had done all this sight-seeing, it was past five o'clock, and I was longing for tea. "We shall have it soon now," I said to myself, as we sat on the side verandah on benches and rocking-chairs, fanning ourselves with palm-leaf fans. Mrs. Trowbridge and the girls had changed their dresses while we were away, and put on white ones, fresh and nice, though the plainest of the plain—except Ide, who had a pink Alsatian bow in her hair and a flowered sash. I think they must have washed their faces with yellow kitchen soap, too, for they were so



“Mr. Troxbridge took me to the beehives to get some honey and show me what a queen bee is like”

incredibly clean and polished that the green of the waving trees seemed to be reflected in their complexion in little sheens and shimmers. I don't suppose it would have occurred to them to dust off the shine with powder, as Mrs. Trowbridge and pretty Patty seem to have no vanity; or perhaps they would consider it wicked.

They all sat and rocked, but nobody said anything about tea.

"They do have it late," I thought.

Suddenly Ide exclaimed, "My, how thirsty I am!" and she got up.

"Oh, joy," I said to myself.

"I guess I'll go and get a drink of water from the mineral spring," she went on; and then catching my yearning eye she asked if I would like to go too.

When your whole soul is sighing for tea, cold water does seem a poor substitute. At I began to lose hope now, so I followed her. The water—which we got at a spring in the deep grass, and drank out of a tin dipper, was deliciously cold, more refreshing than iced water, and didn't make you thirstier than ever again, in half a second. Still, I couldn't tear my thoughts from tea, and when we got back to the house I was encouraged to find that Mrs. Trowbridge and Patty had disappeared.

"I must go and help them get tea," said Ide, "if you'll excuse me."

I said "of course," with alacrity, and hoped soon to see a tray coming out into the verandah, where it was so cool and breezy now. Half an hour passed, however, and nothing happened. It was getting on towards six o'clock, and a smell of frying floated to us from the kitchen.

"I suppose they're beginning to cook something that takes a long time to do, for dinner—or supper, rather," I thought. "She said they were getting tea, so——"

"Tea's ready, good people, if you're ready for it," announced Mrs. Trowbridge's gentle voice at the door.

Mr. Trowbridge and Mr. Brett got up, and I did too, disappointed that we weren't to have it out of doors; but still, I reminded myself, the sitting room would be nice and cool. But I found that we were being led through to the dining room.

There was the long table laid out again, with a regular sit-down meal; cream cheese, and cake, and blackberries, and a big plate of honey; some curious kind of smoked meat cut very thin, and the potatoes which I'd smelled frying.

"What an odd tea!" I thought. But the oddest part was that after all there *wasn't* any tea.

We sat down, and at the far end of the table were two young men, all soapy and sleek, their hair very wet and their sleeves (with no cuffs showing) very short. We were introduced to each other, and they bowed rather awkwardly without saying anything, but I couldn't understand their names. One of the two never spoke, and ate with his knife until he saw me looking, when he stopped and got red. After that he cut up everything on his plate quite small before he ate it, and stuck out his elbows. The other, who sat next to Ide, talked to her in a low voice, but I caught the words "picnic," and "beaux," and they both giggled a great deal.

Instead of tea, those who liked had black coffee with thick cream, and the others drank what I should call lemon-squash, but they all spoke of it as lemonade.

It wasn't much past six when we finished, and soon Mr. Brett asked me how I would like to walk over to Mrs. Randal's and see my friend Miss Woodburn, since she couldn't come to me. The place was less than a mile away by short cuts which he knew, and he would take me there.

The shadows were beginning to grow long and thin when we started, though the sun was still bright, so I carried a sunshade, and went hatless, American fashion.

To avoid going out in the road we took field paths and skirted along the edge of meadows where grain was tall and golden, or white as a summer snowstorm. There were no proper stiles, as with us, so whenever we came to one of the rough fences which divided one field from another I had to mount on the first or second bar, and let Mr. Brett lift me over.

He is so strong that he did it as if I were a bundle of down instead of a tall girl, and I had much the same exhilarating sensation I used to have as a wee thing when I rode wildly on Mohunsleigh's foot. I was glad when we came to the fences, and that there were a good many of them. But I wasn't at all glad when Mr. Brett jumped me over into a grass meadow where there was a whole drove of ferocious-looking black and white cattle.

"*Couldn't* we go some other way round?" I asked, longing to get behind him, but ashamed for him to see what an idiot I am about cows, and perhaps make him lose his good opinion of me as a reasonably brave girl.

"I'm afraid not, unless we turn back," said he. "But you needn't mind them. Remember, you're with an old 'cow puncher.'"

"Oh, were you one, too?" I asked trying to seem at ease.

"Too?"

"I was thinking of a friend of my cousin Mohunsleigh's whom he was always talking about, a Mr. Harborough, who lives in San Francisco. Mohunsleigh knew him abroad somewhere. *He* used to be a 'cow puncher,'—whatever that is—in Texas, I believe, though now he's a millionaire. Did you ever hear of him?"

"Yes," said Mr. Brett, in rather a dry way.

"I was so disappointed not to meet him."

(As we walked on, I kept my eyes on the horrible animals who were grazing at some distance.)

"Why?" he asked the question almost sharply.

"Because my cousin says he's such a glorious person."

"Well gilded, anyhow."

"Oh, I don't mean on that account. I'm rather blasé of millionaires lately. But from Mohunsleigh's accounts he must be—well, the sort of a man we like."

"We?"

"Girls. Brave and adventurous, and reckless, and that sort of thing."

"I'm afraid his millions are more of an attraction to most girls."

"Why, you're as bad as he!" I exclaimed.

"In what way?"

"Unjust, and—almost morbid. I wouldn't have thought *you* would be like that, though perhaps one can't blame him so much, if he's had bad experiences. I *am* sorry for him. It must be miserable to fancy always that people care for you for your money."

"I'm sorry for him, too. At least, I used to be—when—ever I thought of him."

"Aren't you now?"

"No. I believe he's a changed man. He's found that there are exceptions to the gloomy rule he'd laid down for humanity."

"Oh, then he's happier."

"So far as I understand the case, he isn't exactly happy yet. He isn't out of the woods. In fact, he's in the thickest part. But he sees blue sky and the sun shining overhead."

"What do you mean?"

"A fellow who knows him very well told me that Harborough had fallen in love with a beautiful girl who was so unworldly that she might be induced to marry for love—if she cared."

"Then why isn't he happy?"

"Because he doesn't know whether she can ever care for him—except as a friend. He's sure she likes him pretty well, but there's nothing in that. I'm mighty ignorant about such things myself, but they say if a girl doesn't mind showing that she's your friend, and values you in a way, it's a sign she's a thousand miles off from falling in love with you. What's your opinion on the subject—as you seem to be rather interested in Harborough?"

"My goodness, Mr. Brett, there's a cow looking at us. Oh, what *shall* we do? It's the worst cow of all. It's putting its head down now. It doesn't like us. Oh, what an appalling beast. I believe it must be a bull."

"It's a very young one," said he, calmly. "Now, don't be frightened. This is going to be nothing at all."

"Are you *sure*?"

"Can't you trust me?"

"Yes. I know you won't let me be hurt. But you——"

"Don't worry. Perhaps we shall have a little fun. Just wait."

I could cheerfully have waited a hundred years, and then put it off again; but it didn't look as if we should have to wait long—not more than three-quarters of a dreadful second, with my blood in my head, and all the iced water I had drunk at Newport in my spine.

The cows were delighted. Evidently they regarded the horrid, thick-necked brute as their champion. They didn't follow him towards us, but lifted their heads and stared complacently, as much as to say, "Isn't he a

splendid fellow? Now he's going to give them what they deserve."

The rest happened so quickly it was all in a jumble. With a smile, Mr. Brett reached out and took my sunshade, which I'd closed. Just as the bull came at us, he opened it in the creature's face. The bull swerved a few inches, surprised; and the next thing I knew the sunshade was tossed away, Mr. Brett had seized the animal by his horns, and was vaulting on his back with a laugh. "Run to the nearest fence," said he.

He did it as easily as if it were play, and so it seemed to be for him. The bull tore about, ramping and raving, while I obediently flew for the fence and scrambled over without ceremony. There I turned, panting, frightened, yet laughing in spite of myself. Mr. Brett's hat had fallen off, and his short hair was ruffled across his forehead. Riding the black and white bull, hanging on by legs, as well as arms, he looked like a runaway schoolboy, revelling in a mischievous "lark." His eyes sparkled, and his white teeth shone.

The bull was sure he could throw his rider at first, but finding he couldn't, was very much surprised. His wild gallop subsided to a trot, and embracing his great neck, Mr. Brett bent far down to one side, to snatch up my sunshade, which lay on the grass, open and undamaged. A few moment's later, he had steered the bull in some curious way with his feet, so that the beast came loping stupidly near the fence. Then Mr. Brett jumped off, and vaulted over.

"That was a good bit of sport," said he. "It reminds me of old times, when we chaps used to ride steers for a wager. I'm a little out of practice now; but I hope you were amused."

"I was much too terrified," I said, thankful that he was on the right side of the fence at last.

"Then I apologise for the exhibition. The silly brute didn't know he was *our* bull, you see, but I reckon he'll remember now, and act accordingly. Here's your parasol, Lady Betty. I don't think it's hurt. As for my hat, I'll make the cows a present of it. I don't want to keep you waiting any longer."

"Fancy Daniel when he got safely out of the lions' den going back for his hat!" I exclaimed.

"He was just the sort of man to have done it," said Mr. Brett, "if he hadn't a lady waiting."

After that, nothing else happened to upset us on the way to Sally.

The place where she is staying isn't a farm, but quite a small cottage in a lovely garden, walled in with oaks and maples; and Mrs. Randal sells seeds and cuttings.

A young girl came to the door when we rang, and asked us to "please sit down on the piazza"; she would call Miss Woodburn. Then we had a few minutes to wait, and Sally appeared.

I *was* glad to see her! And when she held me tight, and kissed me, I had to wink back some silly tears. It was so good to feel that she cared about me, and would sympathise in everything, for I knew she would.

After Mr. Brett had said "how do you do," and a few polite words, he added that he would just stroll over to the Green Dairy Farm across the way. He knew the farmer there, and would like to have a chat with him. We settled that he was to come back for me in an hour, and then Sally and I were left alone together.

She made me begin at the beginning and tell all my adventures, cause as well as effect, before she would give

me any of her news, or even her opinions on the situation as far as it concerned me.

It made quite a long story, and Sally was a beautiful listener, as only sympathetic and unselfish people can be.

"There wasn't anything else for me to do, was there?" I asked, when she knew everything exactly as it had happened.

She complimented me on my "pluck," like the dear creature she is, and said she hadn't it in her heart to be sorry, as things had turned out, that I had had such a chase to find her.

"To tell the truth, it was your affairs that drove me to Chicago," she went on. "I don't mind your knowing now, deah. We can talk freely about things I couldn't discuss with you before. Of course, I always knew Katharine wanted you for Potter, and that they'd both do anything to get you. It began with her trying to keep other men away from you even on the ship. Do you remember? Nobody could get near you but Tom Doremus, and he wouldn't if Kath hadn't been afraid of Mrs. Van der Windt. It was just the same in Newport, whenever she could fix it so. I couldn't exactly warn you; it wouldn't have been nice. They *are* my cousins, and I was Kath's guest—though I shouldn't have been for long, if I hadn't wanted to watch over you. But you know I did drop hints sometimes, didn't I? It wasn't my business if you'd fallen in love with Potter, but though he isn't a bad fellow, he's not good enough or strong enough for you, Betty, and I should have been mighty sick at heart if he had got you."

"I never felt he wanted me, really," I said, "although he was always proposing."

"Oh, yes, he did want you. Perhaps he wasn't truly in love at first, though he always admired you, deah.

There was an actress that he was crazy about last winter—a nice girl, too, and he would have married her if it hadn't been for Katherine, who was *wild* over it, said such a *mésalliance* in the family would ruin her as well as him, and contrived to break it off somehow. Potter never cared for anyone else so much. The girl seemed to understand his temper exactly, and though he was heart and soul for winning you, after the race was begun, I shouldn't wonder a bit—now he's lost you—if that affair didn't come on again some day. He might do worse."

"I wish the girl joy of him," said I. "But how was it you went away from Newport?"

"Oh, I told Kath what I thought of her for trying to trap you. It *was* that, and nothing else. And she didn't like it. She almost asked me to go, and though I knew it was to get me out of the way, I had to do it. I wish you could have met Mrs. Hale in Chicago. She is the nicest, quaintest woman. You saw her happy family? Well, she's so kind-hearted that when her horses are out at grass, she has a big sunbonnet made for each one. You would laugh to see them prancing about with their bonnets flapping. And she stops cab horses in the street to give them sugar. But after all, it's better for you to be here—with the Trowbridges."

"Mr. Brett has been a saint to me," said I.

Sally smiled her three-cornered smile.

"I think from what you tell me of some of the things you've said to him, and some of the things which have happened, that he *has* been a saint—more of a saint than you know."

"You mean I've tried his temper?" I asked anxiously.

"Not exactly his temper. But never mind. I'll talk to you about myself now."

So she did. And it seems that this invalid widow, Mrs.

Randal, whom she's come to nurse, is the mother of the man she told me about in the Park—the man who turned monk because he loved her, and thought she didn't care.

"I come once or twice a year, even when she's well," said Sally, with the soft voice and eyes which she has for this one subject of all in the world. "It's the best of the few pleasures I have, to be with her and—talk of him; of him when he was a little boy; of him when he was a young man, happy in the thought of the future—not knowing what was to come. I found this little place for her, years ago now. She wasn't happy in Kentucky, for there were relatives there who were not congenial, and used to say things—of her son's religion—which distressed her. But she is old now, and very delicate. She knows I would never forgive her if she didn't have her little maid telegraph for me when she is suffering. I always come at once, and would, no matter where I was. You see, I've no mother of my own; and she is *his* mother; it's almost the same as if she were mine. But don't look so sad, dear. I'm not sad. She's going to get well. We've been glancing over old photographs of his this evening. She has quite forgiven me for the past."

"I should think so!" I couldn't help exclaiming. "You were the one who suffered most."

"Not more than his mother, child! But she's old, as I said, and thank heaven I'm beginning to grow old, too. Each day is one less before we meet—he and I. That's what I'm looking forward to now, and I'm not a bit sad, so kiss me, and tell me just what you think of those dear things, the Trowbridges."

Going home, Mr. Brett and I walked along the road until we'd passed the cow meadow; then we took to the short cuts again. A lovely blue darkness was just

touched with the faint radiance of a new moon, as if the lid of a box had snapped shut on the sun; and the moment the light was gone, the fields lit up with thousands and thousands of tiny, pulsing, flitting sparks.

"What is it?" I asked, astonished.

"Fireflies," said he. "Did you never see any before?"

"Never. How wonderful. They are the most exquisite, magical little things!"

"Then I'm glad you're seeing them for the first time with me," he said.

I stopped, and made him stop, to look at the enchanted rain of tiny lights. We stood in a billowy meadow, with the pale gray-green of the stacked oats dimly silvered by the baby moon, that was hurrying down the west after the sun. The bundles of grain made pointed, gothic arches, and through these, back and forth, in and out, threaded the fireflies, like fairies with lanterns searching for lost members of their band.

What a pity they never come to England to search!

When we got home the stars were pricking out in the sky, and Patty and Ide were down by the gate, counting them. It seems, if you can count seven stars for seven nights, then the first man who touches your hand afterwards you're bound to marry. I counted my first seven, and I do hope it won't rain for a week.

Although I had been so longing for tea, I hadn't been hungry, and had scarcely eaten anything when we had it. Now, I was beginning to be starved. We all sat on the verandah, and Mr. Trowbridge told us things about astronomy, in which he seems as learned as in everything else. By-and-by it was ten o'clock, and Mrs. Trowbridge asked if I weren't tired, and wouldn't like to go to bed. Then I knew the worst. There wasn't going to be any supper.

270 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

We all bade each other good-night.

"What time is breakfast?" I asked Mrs. Trowbridge, expecting something abnormal in the way of earliness, but my eyes did open when she said half-past six.

"You don't need to get up unless you want," she went on. "Patty or Ide will carry you up something."

I wouldn't hear of that, though. I said I would prefer to do what everybody else did, and I saw that this pleased Mr. Trowbridge, who had perhaps feared I would show symptoms of the pampered aristocrat. But he little knows what small pampering I get at home!

By-and-by I stood at my window, watching the fire-flies and envying them because they could get their own supper. Just then among the trees there was a bigger, yellower light than their tiny lanterns. A faint smell of good tobacco smoke came up.

"Lady Betty, is that you?" asked Mr. Brett's voice.

"Yes," I answered, pushing up the frame with the mosquito netting, and leaning over the window sill.

"I've got something for you. Have you a box or basket you can let down with string, if I toss a ball of it up to you?"

"There's a small waste-paper basket," I said, quite excited.

He tossed, and I caught—Stan taught me how, long ago. Then I made the basket ready and sent it down.

"Now," he called after a minute. I hauled the basket up carefully.

"Good-night," said he. "There's a note in it, among other things. Now, pull down your mosquito net, or you'll have trouble."

It was fun opening the basket. There were two chicken sandwiches in it, in a napkin, a piece of jelly cake, a peach, and an ice-cold bottle of milk.

The note was just a few lines scribbled with pencil on a sheet torn from a memorandum book.

"I've been feeling wretchedly guilty about you," it began, "almost as much of a brute as if you were some innocent, helpless creature I'd killed, and buried under the leaves in the woods. No tea this afternoon, and you an English girl! When they say 'tea' here they mean the evening meal—the last one. I, like a beast, didn't notice that you ate nothing; not that I wasn't thinking of you, for I was. I didn't even have the sense to realise that you were being sent perishing to bed. It was Patty who saw all, but was too shy to speak to you. This humble offering is her thought. You shan't be starved after to-night. There was a question of mine you didn't answer this afternoon. I've got a grudge against that black and white steer."

I couldn't think what he meant at first. Then I remembered how he had been asking my opinion about the love affairs of Mohunsleigh's millionaire friend. I don't see, though, why he should care so much what I think of them. It would be lots more interesting if he would ask me questions about himself.

XVIII

ABOUT SOME COUNTRY FOLK, AND WALKER'S EMPORIUM

THE day after I came to Valley Farm was one of the longest days of my life. Not that it wasn't pleasant, for it was. But when you get up before six, and finish breakfast at seven, it does give you a good many hours to do what you like with.

I wasn't allowed to help Mrs. Trowbridge and the girls with their work; Mr. Brett went off directly after breakfast with Mr. Trowbridge and the two mysterious young men, to get in hay or do something useful and farmy, so I sat in the maple grove with Vivace (who is a great favourite in the household) and wrote down all my experiences since Chicago. We had an enormous dinner at twelve, which made me feel very odd, as I'm not used to it; but when we were called to "tea" I knew better than I did yesterday what to expect.

Now, I've been a boarder at the Trowbridges' (I pay four dollars a week, about as much, I suppose, as is spent on one person's food at each meal at Mrs. Ess Kay's!) for eight days, and I'm perfectly happy. I can't bear to think of the time coming when I must go home. It will come, of course, for they will have to send for me whether they really want me back or not, and then I will never see any of these dear people again. Probably I shall never even see Mr. Brett. He says he must go West again soon, that there are things which call him there. That will be the end. I wish one didn't get to depend on

other people so much. I should like to be quite cold hearted, and not care for anyone; 'th'n it wouldn't matter when you had to part. But there's no use in thinking about horrid things just yet.

I've written home, of course. I wrote the day after I arrived. At first, I felt I ought to cable; but if I did, they might send at once, and on second thoughts I decided it wasn't necessary to go to the expense. So I just wrote to Mother to say I couldn't stand it with Mrs. Ess Kay on account of her brother, and I'd left suddenly to join Sally Woodburn in the country, where I was boarding quite close to her. I wrote to Mrs. Ess Kay, too, and said the same thing, asking her to kindly send on my boxes. I didn't mention Mr. Brett, because she wouldn't have remembered who he was, or if she did by any chance, she would only disapprove of his daring to exist still, and perhaps write or wire something rude.

She sent the boxes by what they call "express," but didn't answer my letter, which rather astonished me, as I had thought she would scold, and had dreaded it. But when I told Sally, she wasn't as much surprised as I was. She knew already everything that happened after I ran away from The Moorings, and told me all about it, which interested me a great deal. Mrs. Ess Kay had written her some things, and Mrs. Pitchley (whose maid is an intimate friend of Mrs. Ess Kay's Louise) had supplied all the missing details.

It seems that the day after the Pink Ball Mrs. Ess Kay had one of her headaches—and no wonder. Feeling very ill, she didn't take much interest in me, and took it for granted when Louise said I wasn't out of my room, that I wanted to sleep till luncheon.

Potter had been so furious that he thought to punish me for my sins by sulking. Mrs. Ess Kay did not appear

at luncheon, and Potter went out somewhere. But when I didn't show myself, or even ring, the servants began to think it odd, and spoke to Louise. She knocked at my door, and when after rapping several times there was no answer, she opened it to find the room empty, the bed smooth, my boxes packed, and all Mrs. Ess Kay's presents to me spread out on a sofa.

By that time it was after two; and if only they had known, I was leaving the Waldorf-Astoria to take the train for Chicago with Mr. Brett.

Mrs. Ess Kay was so nervous with her headache and the reaction after all her work in getting up the Great Affair, that when she was told I was nowhere to be found, she had hysterics, and slapped Louise.

Potter was sent for to the Casino, and came home in a rage. They talked things over, and made up their minds that I had either caught a ship sailing for home, or else had gone to Chicago to join Sally. If it hadn't been that they were afraid of a scandal coming out in some horrid society paper, they would have applied to the police for help, but as it was they didn't dare, and Potter said he could manage everything himself.

A ship really had sailed that day, so as well as telegraphing to Sally, Potter went to the offices, then to the docks, and made all sorts of enquiries. From what he heard about some people who had engaged berths at the last minute, he couldn't be quite sure I wasn't one of them, having gone under an assumed name. To add to the trouble, no answer came from Sally. Mrs. Hale, according to instructions, had opened the telegram, and knowing something of the story from Sally, wasn't anxious to relieve Mrs. Ess Kay's mind about me, in too much of a hurry. Instead of having the message wired again, she enclosed it in an envelope, and sent it on to Sally by post,

so there was another delay; and they knew nothing for certain until a letter from Sally and one from me arrived at about the same time.

Sally's opinion was and is, that Mrs. Ess Kay has something up her sleeve; that she won't write to me because she wants to show how hurt and scandalised she is by my ungracious conduct, but that she has some idea for getting even with me sooner or later. If she hadn't that to keep her up, Sally thinks she couldn't have resisted answering my letter with a tirade. Fortunately she can't claw me away from the Trowbridges and make me marry Potter—even if he would have me now, after all my badness—otherwise she would perhaps have tried to act at once. And she can't have me put in prison on bread and water and solitary confinement, as no doubt she would like to do. Still, I don't feel quite easy in my mind about her silence, lest Sally may be right about some disagreeable plan she's hatching. However, as long as Mr. Brett is here, I feel as if he would contrive not to let anything very dreadful happen to me.

I've found out everything about all the members of the family at Valley Farm, now; and I've got acquainted with most of the neighbours. They call them neighbours if they live anywhere within twelve or fifteen miles, and a good many are related to each other, or connected by marriage, while even those who are not have mostly known each other ever since they were children; probably went to school together at a funny little white-painted, wooden building on a hill, which is the "district school." It must be rather fun to teach in it, because if some American stories I've read since I came here are true to life, you board first at one house and then another, giving good advice and helping everyone; and all the young men in the country round about fall in love with you. I thought,

if Mother should be too angry with me for refusing Potter Parker and running away, to let me come home again, I might apply for such a situation; but it seems that nowadays you have to know a great deal, and I should never be taken on, because, unfortunately, I have to do the multiplication table on my fingers.

Mr. Trowbridge, although a farmer who works in his own fields, is an "Honourable." I was surprised when I heard that, as I didn't suppose people had titles in America. But he's a senator or something in his own State, which is very important, so he is called Honourable officially— and on letters, as one is at home if that's all one can scrape up by way of a courtesy title.

The two young men who come in to eat with us, but are never seen about the house at any other time, are "farm hands," though they are not treated at all like servants, and Mr. Trowbridge lends them the newest books and magazines (of which he has quantities) to read in the evening.

One, whose name is Elisha, was in love with Patty, but she didn't care for him, so he is very melancholy and won't talk at the table. But he has cheered up a little lately, and has bought tall collars like Mr. Brett's, instead of wearing turned-over ones which showed far down his neck; and he has sent me flowers through Ide, several times. I tried to thank him for the first ones, but he blushed so much that his forehead got damp, and immediately afterwards he went away and hid for hours, which kept him from his supper; so I thought it better to say nothing about the next.

The other young man, Albert, is paying attention to Ide. Nobody knows whether they are engaged yet, although they go to the apple orchard regularly every evening and sit together in a boat swing which is there, or

if it rains they sit on the front porch, until quit late. They don't seem to have much to say to each other, though, for one of my windows is directly over that porch, but I never hear a sound—not even a laugh. But it seems that in this part of the country it is the thing for a girl and a young man to be left alone together as much as possible while they are making up their minds whether or not they like each other well enough to be engaged.

It is very strange about Patty and Ide. Though Patty is so quiet, almost meek in her ways, and dresses so plainly, and is quite contented to work in the hot kitchen, cooking and washing dishes, it turns out that she is a very rich girl; or will be. She is an orphan, and her grandfather, although a farmer, has more than a million dollars (which sounds tremendous, but wouldn't be as impressive, I suppose, if one did it in pounds); and when he dies, as he must before long, as he is very old, Patty will have all his money.

Young people get on his nerves, so Patty lives with the Trowbridges, who are friends of his, and helps Mrs. Trowbridge with her work. She is so pretty and has such sweet ways that she might make a success anywhere, and it struck me as a pity that she should perhaps marry some young farmer in the neighbourhood, and never know any other life than this. I remarked something of the sort to Mr. Brett when he told me about Patty, and he looked suddenly miserable as if what I'd said had hurt.

"I thought you felt you could be happy among such people as these," he answered, rather irrelevantly.

Then I fancied that I understood a little, for he seems to think that *he* is like the men here, but he isn't a bit, oh, not the least bit in the world, though he says he was brought up on a farm as a little boy, before he ran away and went far out West, and that it's only an "accident of

278 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

fate" he isn't an Albert or an Elisha. As if he could ever have been like one of them! I have never known a man as interesting as he.

Ide really *is* a sort of servant, but she would go away instantly if anybody called her that; and she is so afraid someone may think she is inferior to the others in the house because she is paid wages for her work, that she does her hair elaborately, wears smarter dresses than the rest, and puts herself rather forward with strangers so as to impress them. She wouldn't even like to be called a "help," but says that she "obliges" Mrs. Trowbridge, and she wouldn't stop long enough to draw another breath if she were not treated better, if anything, than Patty.

Even in the East, in very grand houses, I thought some of the servants were rather offhand and queer, though they did consent to have their meals in the servants' hall or somewhere, and not sit in the drawing room. I suppose the reason why they are so different with us, and so polite and well trained, is because at home they are willing to go on being servants all their lives, whereas, in America, it's only a phase in a person's career. You may be a parlour maid one year; the next you may keep a hotel; and the next you may be a millionairess travelling in Europe. There's nothing to prevent, if it's in you, and naturally you always hope it is.

The Trowbridges' neighbours are almost as nice as they are. After I had been here two or three days I was feeding the chickens with Mr. Trowbridge after "tea," when a man and woman came up the avenue. They were countrified looking and rather awkward, I thought at first glance, which was the only one I took, as I at once left Mr. Trowbridge to talk with the newcomers and went away. It wasn't Ide's time yet to sit with Albert, so I found an apple, and sat and rocked in the boat swing with

a book I'd left there earlier in the afternoon. Presently, however, down ran Patty to ask if I would mind coming back to the house, as Mr. and Mrs. Engelhorn had come especially to see me.

"To see me?" I repeated. "What for?"

"Oh, I suppose they thought it would be polite to call," said Patty. "They're such nice people. They have the farm with the low house opposite this. Mrs. Engelhorn was a city girl. Her father is the best jeweller in Arcona, and her brother has the biggest steam cleaning establishment there. She's been beautifully educated, and he's very intelligent. I guess you'll like them."

"Oh, I'll come, of course," I said. "I didn't dream they wanted to see me." But I would much rather have stopped where I was and read the book. Of course it's only prejudice, and the way one has been brought up which makes one feel as if it were odd to meet tradespeople, and it's nonsense, too; for as soon as they get horribly rich nobody seems to mind nowadays, which shows how little sense there is in the idea. Still, I did want to laugh, though I was ashamed of myself; but a picture of Mother being called on formally by a steam cleaner would come up before me.

Mr. and Mrs. Engelhorn had put on their best clothes, and they were dears. I was as agreeable as I knew how to be, and after I had been with them a little while, I felt that it was they who were superior. They talked about the most interesting and learned things, just as Mr. Trowbridge does, and in the same simple, modest way. We went into the parlour, where Mrs. Engelhorn played as well as a professional, and sang exquisitely, in a cultivated contralto voice. I could have cried to see how work-worn her hands looked, as they flew so cleverly over the keys of Mrs. Trowbridge's splendid Steinway Grand

piano, which is much finer and in better condition than ours at home. After they had gone, Mr. Trowbridge told me that Mr. Engelhorn is the greatest authority on geology in the State of Ohio, that he knows just as much about botany, and is a fine Greek and Latin scholar, having picked up all his knowledge himself without any University training. Americans are wonderful!

Other people just as interesting in different ways have been, since, and there was only one I didn't like. He came yesterday, and is a dissenting parson, a Congregationalist, I think, though I don't know what that means, or how it's different from a Methodist or a Presbyterian. He and his wife arrived to noon dinner, and I had to be civil because the Trowbridges respect them very much; but it was difficult when the man said that England was the most immoral and decaying country in the world, and his wife echoed him. He is a smug old fellow with a fringe of grey fluff growing out all round under his chin; and his upper lip, very long and shaved, is like the straight cover you see on mantelpieces in country hotels.

I summoned courage to stand up for England, and the wife—a fat, sallow creature with three chins and a dissenting-looking chignon—glared at me as if she expected white bears to crawl out from under the table and gobble me up.

"Why do you think England is such a wicked country?" I asked.

"Because, to mention only one reason [as if the others were too bad to tell] your clergymen are put into their places by patronage, without any regard to their qualifications as teachers of religion."

"At least they're gentlemen," I snapped.

"Superficially, they *may* be," he admitted, as if to pry under the surface would be worse than "scratching

a Russian to find a Tartar." "But they are Puppets and Sycophants."

Unluckily I don't know what a sycophant is exactly, so it would have been dangerous to argue; and anyway, before I could get out another word he had gone on again.

"Mrs. Panter and myself had a chance to go to Great Britain last year," he said. "Our congregation offered us the trip with Cook's tickets, for ten weeks, to show their appreciation of my services. But after reflection, we decided not to undertake the tour. I have no wish to see England as it is to-day. Such illusions as are left to me I would rather keep. It would depress me to visit a country which is going down hill as Britain is, morally, financially and intellectually. Trade is leaving her, and coming to us. We are getting her shipping, we are taking away her steel and iron market for all the world, and she deserves to have lost what she is losing; still, London must be a sad sight to those who have eyes to see, and——"

"I don't think you'd find that grass has begun to grow in Bond Street yet," said I. "And if you fancy that our finances are in such a bad way, you had better read the Blue Book."

I did think this was smart of me, for I hardly know the Blue Book from a Book of Beauty, but I've heard Stan say that you're obliged to believe it, and that it proves England to be increasing every year in prosperity. So I was glad I remembered to speak of it, and catching Mr. Brett's eyes I saw such a twinkling smile in them that I hurried to look away, or I should have laughed and spoiled everything.

There couldn't be a greater contrast between two men than between the Reverend Jonas Panter and the great Whit Walker of the Emporium at Hermann's Corners.

We drove to Mr. Walker's after the Panters had gone, as we all felt (though nobody put it precisely into words) that we wanted some enlivening.

We didn't start until after "tea," as the Emporium is always open till half past nine, and there was going to be an "ice cream festival" there that night. I didn't know what an ice cream festival meant, but Mr. Trowbridge said I should see for myself, and it would probably be different from anything I had yet experienced.

Everybody from the farm went except Elisha, who didn't wish to, as he is not quite happy yet, and is practising the flute of evenings. Mr. Trowbridge and Mr. Brett and I all drove in the buggy. It was rather a squeeze in one seat, but it was fun, and we were very merry. I like buggies, though they do sound almost improper to an English ear, and it makes it seem more amusing, somehow, because they talk about going for "a ride" instead of a drive.

The rest all squashed into a big wagon, and sat on the hay. I would have gone in that way too, but Mr. Trowbridge wanted me to try his horse; and we could hear the others laughing every minute as they came jolting on behind us.

It was about seven miles to Hermann's Corners, and after a lovely drive through charming, peaceful country we arrived just as it was beginning to be dusk.

I couldn't have imagined such a place as the Emporium, and when I was in the thick of it I said to myself that it would be worth one's while coming over to the States just to visit it, if nothing else. If I had to choose between, I believe I'd rather see it than Niagara Falls; for one knows Niagara Falls from biographs and things, and nothing short of actually seeing could give one the slightest idea of Mr. Whit Walker and his Emporium.

My first impression of the Emporium was a huge, rambling wooden building rather like a vast barn with a dozen smaller barns tacked on to it, and windows let in. It is painted pea-green, and has a rough verandah running partly round it—a high verandah with no steps, or if any, at such long intervals that you must search for them. But as there's no pavement we just scrambled out of the buggy and cart onto the verandah, and there we were landed among the most extraordinary collection of things I ever dreamed of. The stock in the Emporium having overflowed from the inside onto the verandah, we stumbled about among boxes of eggs, sewing machines, crates of dishes, garden tools, brooms, rocking chairs, perambulators, boots, "canned" fruit, children's toys, luggage, green vegetables, ice cream freezers, bales of calico, men's suits, piled-up books, clothes lines, and a thousand other "goods."

A number of young men were sitting about on the biggest of the boxes, and on chicken coops, wherever they could clear a space, and had the air of being in a club. Our party knew them, almost all, and they exchanged "how do you do's." Mr. Brett seemed the only stranger; but as he told me, he hasn't often visited his cousins.

From the open doors and windows of the Emporium streamed out the strangely mingled smells of all the things in the world which happened to be missing on the verandah, and most of those that were there. As a fragrance it was indescribable, but it was nice, and rather exciting, I don't know why, unless there was a quantity of spice in it.

Just as we threaded our way through the groups of young men, who looked at us a good deal, people were lighting the gas in the Emporium. It was incandescent, and blazed up suddenly with a fierce light as if it were a volcano

having an eruption. All the women inside (there was quite a crowd of them, bareheaded, or in perfectly fascinating frilled sunbonnets), shrieked and then giggled. A man who was surrounded by girls said something we couldn't hear, which made everybody laugh; and Mr. Trowbridge exclaimed:

"That's Whit, sure, holding court. Couldn't be anybody else."

"And I guess that's the Honourable," said the voice we had heard—such a nice voice; it was enough to make you laugh with pleasure just to hear it—and the head we could see towering over the sunbonnets began to move towards us. The girls edged away good-naturedly, and there was a man almost as fine-looking as Mr. Brett, smiling at us, and holding out his big hand.

Everything was big about him; his voice, his brown throat, his shoulders, and his good white smile, shining with kindness and two rows of perfect teeth; his nature, too, as you could see by his beaming, humorous grey eyes, and the generous dimple in his square chin.

"Whit, this is the little English ladyship I've told you about, who's staying over at our house," said Mr. Trowbridge. So we were introduced, and the great Whit shook my hand with a vigorous magnetism which made me feel I would like to clap, and give him three cheers.

He is the sort of man I should try to make President of the United States, if I were an American: and I'm sure he would get lots of votes from his part of the country if he were nominated.

"I'm real pleased to meet you," said he, "and I'm honoured to have you visit my store. Say, I guess some of our American leading ladies will have to get a hustle on if they want to save themselves now you're over here. I didn't know they made 'em like that on your side. I tell

you what it is, Honourable, I won't have much use for some of our fellows if they let her go back, eh? Now, ma'am, you just tell me what handle I'm to put to your name, so I won't make any fool mistake, and then we can get ahead like a house on fire."

"I'm usually called Lady Betty," I said, feeling an idiot, as everyone was standing round in a ring.

"What, at the first go? No, ma'am, I couldn't do it. I haven't got the cool, ingrowing nerve. Couldn't I make it Countess, to show my respect?"

"But I'm not a Countess," I laughed.

"Well, I guess I'll just go one better and raise you to Princess, then. It's the best I can do, having been reared with plain Misses and Mississes. You look like a Princess, anyhow, and the Queen might be proud to have you for a cousin. Now we've fixed that up, maybe you'll let me show you around the premises, and you can tell me if the Emporium bears any resemblance to your London stores."

"Very well, Prince, I shall be delighted," said I, and he laughed a nice, mellow roar.

It was a great thing, I soon found, for a visitor to be escorted by the proprietor of the Emporium. Never was such a popular and much-sought-for man as he. He was wanted everywhere by everybody. People felt aggrieved if they had to go away without at least a hearty "How do you do?" from Whit. There were several attendants, quite dashing young men, but they were mere ciphers compared to the "boss."

Accompanied by Mr. Walker and Patty, whom he chose as the companion of our explorations, we went upstairs and downstairs, and left no corner of the Emporium unvisited.

"Aren't you afraid to leave so many things outside on

the verandah?" I asked. "Suppose they should be stolen?"

The great man only laughed, but a lanky customer who overheard drawled out:

"What, steal from Whit Walker of Hermann's Corners? Wa'al, I guess the skunk mean enough to do that would get himself lynched by every decent chap in this darned county."

"I've got one friend, you see, Princess," chuckled my king of the Emporium.

"You've got two," said I.

"Well, now, that's mighty pretty of you. Say, do you mean it, honour bright?"

"Honour bright," I repeated.

"Then I wonder if I might ask a little favour of you?"

"Of course. What is it?"

"I'll tell you before we part. But come on down now, girls. I want you should both choose a present to take home."

We picked our way down the steep stairs, littered with the overflow from shelves and counters. In the principal "show room," if one could call it that, he pressed us to accept some jewellery—poor stuff, but the best he had, and he ingenuously admired it. We steadfastly refused, however, and Patty took a Japanese fan, while I selected several choice specimens of chewing gum, as being novel and characteristic.

By this time the "ice cream festival" was beginning. It was held in a vacant lot behind the Emporium, and a canvas awning had been put up over two or three dozen bare tables on the grass. Several employees of the "store"—extra hands, perhaps—were kept frantically busy ladling out from huge freezers into earthenware saucers big slabs of frozen custard. All the gallant young beaux of

the neighbourhood "treated" the girls they wished to favour, and spent ten cents a saucer for the "ice cream," with a big sugared "cooky" thrown in. The great Whit himself invited me to sit down with him, so Mr. Brett who had been coming up to ask Patty and me both, perhaps, whisked Patty away, leaving me to Mr. Walker.

"Now, I'll tell you that favour I want," said he. "I hope you won't think I'm presuming too much on a short acquaintance, but it's a mighty important thing for me. It's about that little gal over there."

"Patty?" I asked.

He nodded.

"Nobody else. There *ain't* anybody else, so far as I'm concerned; meaning no disrespect to you, Princess. My old friend the Honourable says she just worships you, and would lie down and let you walk over her if you wanted."

"I didn't know," I said.

"Well, it's gospel truth, I guess, and I don't blame her. If you——"

"She has been *sweet* to me," I interrupted. "Why, what do you think she did, when I mentioned that the huge bells on Mr. Jacobsen's cows kept me awake nights? You know how that one field of Mr. Jacobsen's, which he won't sell, comes into Mr. Trowbridge's farm, and he keeps his cows there to be disagreeable? Well, Patty got up in the night, and climbed on the fence and caught the cows by offering them salt. Then she held on by their ears, and tied rags over their bells—horrid, loud bells—so they could make no noise. Only fancy, and some of those cows are awfully fierce. The rags have stopped on ever since; that was the way I found out, for she didn't tell for days."

"It's just like that pretty, quiet little thing," said Mr. Walker. "I wish she'd be that sweet to me. I want her

mighty bad to have me, Princess, but she's read novels, I guess, and anyhow, she doesn't think I'm romantic enough. I was always kind of afraid there was somebody else. Now I shouldn't wonder if it ain't that good-looking young cousin of the Trowbridges. Couldn't you find out for me, as she thinks such a lot of you? And if she hasn't got her heart too much set on anybody else, could you try to use your influence for me? You see, you're a travelled lady, though you're so young, and if you could say I was a man, in your opinion, it might make all the difference."

"You can depend on me to do my best," I said. But I didn't feel amused and full of fun any more, as I looked over at Patty and Mr. Brett. If she admires him—and how could she help it?—there's no reason why he shouldn't admire her, when one comes to think of it. She is pretty and sweet, a perfect little lady, and an heiress.

I can't get used to the idea. The cowbells didn't ring at all last night, but I couldn't sleep for thinking of it, and for telling myself that perhaps this is why Mr. Brett looked queer when I spoke of Patty marrying a farmer.

XIX

ABOUT GETTING ENGAGED

I FELT when I got up this morning that I was in a dreadfully embarrassing and uncomfortable position about Patty and my promise to Mr. Walker. If I kept it, and tried to use my influence with her, it might be that I would be working against Mr. Brett. It would be hateful to do that, as we are such friends; but I was afraid there must be something rather catty in my nature, (though I never thought so before) because I could not approve of a marriage between him and Patty. My private opinion was that Patty wasn't at all the sort of girl to make him happy; but I didn't dare to depend too much on the wisdom of my opinion, lest it should be biassed by prejudice. It is so hard when you have a friend who has been all yours, to see that some other girl may be more congenial to him than you are, and that the best thing for him would be to fall in love with her.

Mr. Brett has known Patty for a long time, and though he hasn't been here often, he has made flying visits sometimes, I know; and even Patty and Ide both call him "Jim"; never Mr. Brett. I reminded myself as I thought it all over, that probably one reason why he wanted to stay with his cousins now was to see Patty again, not in the least because of his friendship with me, which is quite a recent thing compared to his acquaintance with Patty. I had to admit that though we have been such friends, all he has done for me could easily be accounted for by that American chivalry to women, on which the men over here

290 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

are so keen as a nation, rather than any particular liking for me as a girl. And I must have a horrid, exacting disposition, because discovering this made me feel absolutely ill. I was so jealous of Patty, because she could perhaps take away my best friend and have him for her lover, that all her pretty little ways and looks quite annoyed me, and I felt I could have slapped her.

Such feelings made me hate myself, for it is so unpleasant finding out suddenly that you are a brute; yet I would not indulge my wicked heart by telling Patty that she ought to marry Mr. Walker. I could scarcely eat any breakfast or dinner, and early in the afternoon I crept out of doors, very miserable. I felt that Vivace was the only being on earth who really cared for me, and even he was more interested at the time in a rabbit hole he had found than in my society. He wouldn't come away from it when I called, so I bundled him under my arm, and walked off with him to the sugar camp, where I could be alone, and think things over, without having people say I looked pale, and ask whether the ice cream festival at Hermann's Corners had given me a headache.

Patty and Ide had decided to make maple candy and "chocolate fudge" after dinner, so that we could have it to eat in the evening, and Mr. Brett and I had promised to help. American girls always seem to make candy if they have nothing else more interesting to do, and usually I think it very entertaining. Carolyn Pitchley's often went wrong, and she would keep several servants busy clearing away plates and spoons, bringing fresh ones, and cleaning out the chafing dish which she had burnt. But Patty and Ide are cleverer: they do everything for themselves; and I should have enjoyed helping, if I had been in a different mood. As it was, I would have realised

that I was an outsider, and that maybe they would be gayer without me, though they are always so polite. I had slipped away without speaking to anyone, and as I was pretty sure that no one would come to the sugar camp at this time of day, I could let myself be as gloomy as I liked.

I sat there in the deep green shade of the maples, on the log where Mr. Brett and I had talked the first day I came to the Valley Farm. All the disagreeable things that ever happened to me since I was a child took this opportunity to stir in their graves and come to life again. Then they sat down in front of me in a dreary semicircle, staring me in the face until I couldn't stand it any longer, and began to cry. Vivace was very much surprised, and jumped up with his paws in my lap, as if he were saying, "What *is* the matter?" This was a comfort, and I put my head down on his, with my arms round his neck, and cried more.

If you once let yourself go, like that, you can't stop. Hearing your own little chokes and gasps makes you pity yourself so much that your heart nearly breaks. I was sobbing out loud, presently, which made Vivace whine, and I had almost begun to enjoy my utter forlornness and the distinction of being the most miserable person in the whole world when a distracted voice exclaimed:

"Why, Lady Betty, Lady Betty, for heaven's sake what's happened?"

I looked up all teary and flushed, and there was Mr. Brett, staring at me with horrified eyes, and his face as desperate as if he had found me struck by lightning or gored by the black and white bull.

I was so ashamed and confused that I couldn't speak, but just sat there gazing up helplessly at him with tears

292 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

running down my cheeks, and my lips trembling. The most awful look came into his eyes, and he went as pale as I was red.

"My precious one, my darling!" he stammered, and dropping down on one knee by the big log, he put his arms round me.

"Oh!" I said. And then my head was nestling down into his neck, and instead of being wretched I was perfectly happy.

"Who has dared to make you cry?" he asked, holding me close.

"You," I answered.

"I?"

"I thought you were only being kind to me because—because you're an American and it's your duty to a foreigner."

He laughed at that—an excited, happy laugh, with a queer break in it.

"I've been half out of my mind with love for you, ever since the first day I saw you looking down at me in the steerage. Am I *quite* out of it now, or can it be true that you care for me—just a little, little bit?"

"I care for you, *dreadfully*," said I. "Why, this isn't friendship, is it? It's being in love."

"I should think it was—with me," he said. "It's all of me, heart, soul and body, drowning in love."

"Don't drown," I whispered to him. "I—can't spare you."

After that we didn't say a word, but I hadn't supposed it was possible for any human creature to feel so seraphically happy as I did. I don't know how long a time passed before we even spoke, but it seemed only a minute—a minute stolen straight out of heaven. And he was so handsome and dear that I would have kept that minute forever

if I could, for it was impossible to believe that another could be so perfect.

But by and by it did merge into sister minutes, just as good, and we began to talk and tell each other things.

He told me again how he'd loved me from the very first instant, and I told him that after the day on the dock, if not before, I'd never quite had him out of my thoughts for a moment.

"There has always been a sort of *undertone* of you," I went on, "no matter what else I was thinking of, just as Sally says, when you are near the sea you hear it through every other sound."

He liked having me say that, and his eyes *are* too glorious when he likes things that I say.

"I loved you so much," he answered, "that I felt my love *must* have some power over your heart; it couldn't go for nothing. I knew I wasn't worthy of you, but the love was, for no man in your own world could offer you a greater one. That's my justification for asking you to put your hand in mine. But am I asking too much? Are you sure you won't regret anything you may have to give up?"

"There's nothing I wouldn't give up to be with you always," I assured him. "But I don't see that I shall have to give up much that I really care for. We shall be poor, of course, but I shan't mind that a bit—with you. We can live in a sweet little cottage somewhere, can't we? Or if you have to be in a town, we shall have a wee, wee flat, and it will be such fun looking after it, just like having a doll's house, only a hundred times better. I've never been rich, you know; it's always been rather a struggle, and ever so many of my dresses have been made out of Mother's or Victoria's. I shall learn to cook and sew."

"If I were so poor as all that, darling, I shouldn't be

asking you to marry me," said Jim. "I'm better off than you think, for as I told you, I've been doing fairly well lately, and I guess if one of us two ever has to cook it will be I. We might have to do that sometimes, but it will only be if we're camping somewhere."

"I do hope so. It would be glorious!" I exclaimed.

"We can have the cottage or the flat all right, or maybe even both if things go on as well as they're going now," he said, "and there's nothing on God's earth I won't do to make you happy. Heavens! I should think so, after what you're doing for me—trusting me, without knowing any more of me than you've seen in these few weeks——"

"I'd have trusted you to the world's end, after the day you jumped overboard and saved the little boy. Besides, you were *you*; and I'd have trusted you just the same if you hadn't."

"Bless you, my angel. But think of the marriages you might have made."

"I couldn't have made more than one, at least I hope not," said I, flippantly. "I could *never* have married anyone but you, so I should have had to be an old maid if you hadn't asked me, and think how awful that would have been. You *don't* regret asking me, do you?"

"Regret? Well—it doesn't bear talking of. I suppose I ought to be able to say that I'd meant to keep my love to myself, and it only sprang out on an ungovernable impulse. But it wouldn't be true if I did. I always meant to ask you, from the very first—though I had little enough hope, even up to to-day, that it would be anything more than friendship on your part. But oh, how hard I did mean to try for you. My one virtue was to wait until you had seen enough of other men—men of a different sort—for you to be sure you didn't prefer one of them. And when accident had put you very near me, I

did manage not to lose my head and speak, while you were, in a way, under my protection, for that would have been brutal. But Heaven knows—and Miss Woodburn knows—that I came mighty near it once or twice. I'm thankful I didn't. Now you know the best and worst of the other sort of man, and the best and worst of me. You see the kind of people whose blood runs in my veins, and still you are ready to say that my people shall be your people. I'm not afraid of anything that can happen now."

"You needn't be," I said, slipping my other hand into his—for he had one of them already. "Mother may be vexed with me for going against her wishes, but she will have to forgive me—or even if she doesn't, I shall have you."

"I think she will forgive you, darling," said Jim. "I will make her forgive you."

"I believe you could make anybody do anything!" I cried. "Sally will be glad about this, I know. I can see now that she must always have hoped for it to happen, though I didn't realise what she meant at the time. But we had *such* a talk in the Park the day we met you, about marrying for love. And she advised me that it was the only thing to do. Oh, I am sorry for everybody who isn't in love, aren't you? And that reminds me, I must try and make dear little Patty in love with Mr. Walker. You'll help me, won't you?"

The rest of the day was perfectly divine, and it is almost as delightful to live it over again as I am doing now, in writing the story of it, after we have said good-night.

We forgot all about going back to the house, until some one came out and rang the bell for tea in the field, where we couldn't help hearing. Then we told the cousins our news, and they were immensely pleased. They seemed to think that Jim and I were made for each other, and

296 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

Mrs. Trowbridge said she had seen that it was coming, all along.

After tea we walked over to call on Sally, and she was just as glad as I thought she would be.

"You are going to marry one of the finest fellows on earth, I believe," said she, "and I congratulate you as well as him."

I do love Sally!

XX

ABOUT JIM AND THE DUKE

IT was a very different waking up the next day. My first thought was: "Can it be really true or is it only a dream that I'm engaged to Jim?" And I almost cried for joy when I was quite sure it was true.

We both wrote letters to my mother, and so did Sally. I didn't see theirs, but I could guess what they said, and I could trust Sally to praise Jim. Still, all the praises in the world wouldn't reconcile Mother to what I was going to do. I could hear her saying: "Who *is* he?" And I was sure she would add, "How much has he got?" But whatever happened, we were not going to give each other up.

Jim had promised Mr. Trowbridge to pronounce judgment on a horse which he thought of buying, and the man who wanted to sell the creature brought it to the farm about eleven o'clock. Sally had come, to tell about the letter she had just posted to Mother, and Jim was in the sitting room writing his. I think he had forgotten about the horse, until Mr. Trowbridge appeared, looking rather excited.

"Say, Jim," he exclaimed, "Jake Jacobsen's here with the horse. He's round by the barn now, and you might as well have a look at it; but it's an awful brute, and I ain't going to take it, at any price."

"What's the matter with the horse?" asked Jim, sealing up his letter, and looking interested.

"It's mad crazy, that's all; but it's enough for me. I

thought there must be something wrong for Jake to be offering it at the price he did. He led it here, and you just ought to have seen the brute dance and make ugly eyes when first Albert and then I tried to get astride of it. Jake swears the only reason he'll sell cheap is because his wife has taken a dislike to the horse, and what she says, goes with him. He's ready to bet anything the animal's as mild as a lamb, only a bit frisky, and certainly it's as handsome a beast as I ever laid eyes on. But he'll have to get rid of it at the fair."

"I'll come," said Jim, getting up.

I jumped up too.

"Oh, please don't have anything to do with such a vicious creature," I begged. "You might be killed."

Jim laughed. "The horse isn't sired that could kill me, I reckon. I know them too well. Why, little girl, I was brought up among horses. You can trust me not to run too big risks, now I've got something to make life worth living."

Stan has often told me that men hate girls to fuss over them, so I bit my lip and didn't tease any more, but I was far from happy. I didn't like the look in his eyes.

"May Sally and I go and see the horse with you?" I meekly asked.

"I'll ride him up to the house, if I find he's worth your seeing," Jim said. "But you mustn't worry if we don't come this way for awhile. I may have to work with him a bit before he's ready to show himself off to ladies."

With that he got his hat and went out with Mr. Trowbridge, who was waiting with a twinkle in his eyes.

"Oh, dear, I feel as if something horrid was going to happen!" I said to Sally, when they had gone.

"Pooh!" said she. "I should be sorry for the animal who tried to play tricks with that young man. You'll

find you haven't known him, till you see him on a horse."

"I daresay I'm silly," I admitted. "But I have a presentiment of *something*. Let's go and sit out on the verandah and watch. We can't see the barn, but if they come out in the farm road we shall catch sight of them."

"All right," said Sally. "The sun's hot on the verandah; but that's a detail."

Already Jim and Mr. Trowbridge had disappeared, but as we were choosing the coolest place for our chairs, we saw a dusty, nondescript old vehicle rattling up the maple avenue, and just about to turn into the narrow road which leads round the side of the house. The hood was up to protect the passengers from the sun, so at first we could see only the driver, and gather an indistinct impression that there were two figures in the back seat.

"Visitors," said I. "I didn't know Mrs. Trowbridge was expecting——" Then I broke off with a little gasp.

"Oh, Sally, it's——"

"The Duke and Katherine!" she gurgled.

All my blood raced up to my head, as if I were going to have a sunstroke.

"No wonder I had a presentiment," I groaned, forgetting my fright about the horse, for a moment. "Do stand by me."

"I will," said Sally.

Mrs. Trowbridge and the girls were busy in the kitchen, making peach jam: so when the wretched old chaise drew up close to the verandah, Sally and I were alone to receive it.

If my sense of humour hadn't been trampled upon by various emotions which were all jumping about at the same time, I should have had hard work not to laugh when Stan and Mrs. Ess Kay scrambled out from under the

lumbering old hood, which was like a great coal scuttle turned over their heads. Their hair was grey with dust, their faces purple with heat, and evidently they were both in towering tempers.

Stan looked at me the way he did once when I was small and spoiled his favourite cricket bat by digging up worms with it;—as if he could have shaken me well and boxed my ears, and would if I weren't a girl. As for Mrs. Ess Kay, she smiled; but her smile meant worse things than Stan's frown.

"Hullo, dear boy," I chirped, nervously. "How do you do, Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox?"

Sally murmured something, too, and Stan had the grace to claw off his hat, showing how damp his poor hair was on his crimson forehead, but he didn't even pretend to smile.

"A nice dance you've led us," said he. "By Jove, I wouldn't have thought it of you, Betty."

"Maybe you don't understand yet," said I. "Wait till I've explained, and I'm sure you won't be cross, because you always were a dear."

"It's no good wheedling," he grumbled. "I'm not going to wait for anything. We've come to take you home, and the quicker you pack up and get ready the better."

"What do you mean by home?" I enquired.

"To Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox's house in New York, where she says she'll be good enough to put us up till the next decent ship sails for England."

"I'm not going back to Mrs. Stuyvesant-Knox's," said I. "She knows why it's impossible."

"Rot," said Stan. "She's jolly kind to have you, after the way you've acted. Anybody'd think you were eight, instead of eighteen. You deserve to be put on

bread and water for making me come three thousand miles to fetch you home."

"I didn't ask you to come," said I, "and you needn't have bothered. Is Vic engaged yet?"

"Yes, she is; the day before I started. What's that got to do with it?"

"A good deal, according to her," I replied. "I'm engaged, too."

"The dickens you are!" exclaimed Stan, getting redder than ever, while Mrs. Ess Kay gave a little start and glared at Sally.

My blood was up now, and I didn't care what I said. The sooner Stan knew everything just as it was, the better.

"Yes, the dickens I am," I echoed, defiantly, "and I don't intend to be treated like a naughty child, by anyone. I've done nothing wrong, or underhand. We've only been engaged since yesterday, though we both fell in love at first sight on shipboard, and we've written to mother and you, this very morning."

"Engaged to a man you met on shipboard!" repeated Stan, looking flabbergasted, and turning from me to Mrs. Ess Kay.

"Tom Doremus!" she gasped. "Yet no, that's impossible. He's in Newport. But there was *no* one else. I was particularly careful."

"I am engaged to marry Mr. James Brett," I said. "He is——"

"There was no such man on the ship," she broke in, sharply.

Then, suddenly, she almost jumped.

"Goodness *gracious!*" she exclaimed. "Oh, Duke, this is too *awful*. I remember there was a person in the *steerage*. But this is madness. It can't be——"

"He did cross in the *steerage*," I said. "What of it?"

He is the best, and handsomest man I ever saw, and there's no finer gentleman than he; you can ask Sally if there is, for she knows him."

"And thoroughly approves of him," Sally finished, taking my hand. "Duke, I assure you Betty is to be congratulated. I understand that the Duchess was not averse to her marrying an American, and the one she has chosen is of the very best type."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Woodburn, but hang the type," said Stan, who never did get on with Sally. "It's absolutely impossible that my sister should marry such a person, and you ought to have known better than to encourage her. This is a hundred times worse than I thought when I flung up the best shoot of the season to come and fetch you, Betty. You and I were always by way of being pals, but I agree with the Mater now; you've behaved disgracefully, and as for the man, whoever he is——"

"Here he comes to speak for himself," cut in Sally, squeezing my hand hard.

There was a sound in the distance; voices shouting, but not the voice I loved. We all looked, and a black horse with a man on his back sprang into sight, like a rocket gone wrong. It was Jim, looking more beautiful than any picture of a man ever painted, his face transported with the joy of battle and triumph, and that fiend in horse shape under him doing all he knew to kill.

It was a terrible and yet a splendid thing to see, that struggle. I hadn't known how I adored Jim, and how I admired him, till I saw him with that smile on his face, sitting the black devil as if he were one with him in spite of the brute's murderous plunges.

The two shot past the house like a streak of lightning, then wheeled back again, the horse clearing a ditch and a



"Jim smiled and kept his seat without the least apparent effort"

five-barred fence from one meadow into another; but he didn't jump in spite of Jim; rather was it in spite of himself. Then there was a series of mad buck jumpings, leaps into the air, and downward plunges. The beast sat on his haunches, and then reared up with a great bound, to waltz on his hind legs and paw the air, snorting. But still Jim smiled and kept his seat without the least apparent effort.

"Jove! that fellow can ride," muttered Stan, taken out of himself by his man's admiration for a man.

"It's Jim Brett, *my* Jim Brett," I cried. "What do you think of him now?"

But it didn't occur to Stan to answer. I don't suppose he even heard; he was far too deeply absorbed in the passing drama; and in a minute more Jim and the black horse were out of sight again.

But I was not at all afraid for him now. I was only proud, and sure—as sure as I was of life—that he would conquer.

Nobody spoke. Mr. Trowbridge, and Mr. Jacobsen, the disagreeable cowbell man who owned the horse, ran by as fast as they could go, too excited to glance at the house, and Albert and Elisha followed. Mrs. Trowbridge and the girls had come out from the kitchen and were hanging over the nearest fence. Patty was whimpering a little, so I guessed all in a flash that she had cared for Jim. (But she is so sweet she will get over it now he is mine; and already I've made her realise thoroughly what a fine fellow the great Whit is.)

We stood still in our places and watched. I could hear my heart beat, and it had not time to calm down before Jim came riding back on the black horse—a changed black horse, all winning airs and graces, to cover shamed penitence now.

The creature pirouetted up the side road, and Jim stopped him at the verandah, patting the throbbing black neck. "Well? I believe I'll buy him myself," he said smiling to me; and then he saw Mrs. Ess Kay and my brother.

"By Jove, Harborough!" said Stan. "It *is* you, isn't it? Surely it isn't your double?"

"Harborough it is," said Jim, while I listened, dumb with wonder. "How are you, Duke? I was rather expecting you might turn up; but I cabled to you last night to Boodles', and wrote you this morning on the chance you hadn't started."

"Well, I'm blown," remarked Stan, most inelegantly. "Are you Brett, or is Brett you, or is he somebody else?"

"My name is James Brett Harborough; perhaps you didn't know, or had forgotten," said Jim; and then, jumping off the horse and throwing the lines to Mr. Jacobsen, who had just trotted anxiously up, he came to me.

"Will you forgive me?" he asked.

"I don't know yet what it's all about," I said, dully.

"Miss Woodburn knows; and Mohunsleigh knew. You see, he and I were old pals, so I told him I was in love with his cousin, and was going to try hard to win her, in my own way. You remember Mohunsleigh's friend Harborough. You said the other day you were sorry for him, and—you wished him joy of his love affair."

"Oh, is *that* the reason you pretended to be only Jim Brett?"

"I *am* Jim Brett. But now you understand, will you forgive me?"

"I don't understand yet, except that you must have been afraid I might care more for your money than for you, if I knew. Oh, how *could* you think such a thing of me? But about the steerage——"

"That was beforehand. It had nothing to do with

you, though everything that was to come, came from it. I was abroad for a couple of years, and a friend I knocked up against in Paris last June bet me a thousand dollars that in spite of all my queer experiences, I wouldn't have the pluck to rough it in the steerage of a big ocean liner. I took the bet, and won it. If it hadn't been for seeing you, I should have gone West almost at once after landing in New York, but I *had* seen you, so I stayed. Luckily for me, I'd met Miss Woodburn often in San Francisco and once here. She recognised me in my steerage get-up and was the only one who did; but her tact kept her from spoiling sport. She guessed there must be a game on, and said not a word to anyone. She wouldn't, even if I hadn't managed to send her a note, which I did. I had a conversation with her on board, too, the day before getting in, and—we talked about you. Even then I felt sure you couldn't be the sort of girl to care about money, but——”

“It was partly my fault, Betty,” Sally broke in when he paused. “To be quite, quite frank, I knew that the Duchess had fallen in with some ideas of Katherine's, and I couldn't tell how far your bringing up mightn't have influenced your nature, so I encouraged Mr. Harborough to test you by keeping up the story that he was a poor young fellow named Jim Brett. It handicapped him, and kept him away from you; but you were interested in him to start with, and I did my best to keep up the romance. I thought he wouldn't lose by it in the end, and he hasn't. There was the morning in the Park; I managed that; and I got Katherine to send him an invitation to her big party. He was playing a waiting game, because he wanted you to care in spite of every drawback, or else he wouldn't want you to care at all; and then, before he was ready for any *coup*, Fate stepped in and did the rest.”

306 LADY BETTY ACROSS THE WATER

"In the best way it could have been done, I think," said Jim. "Now, little girl, do you understand, and have you forgiven me?"

"I'd like to think you could have trusted me from the very first, without playing at all," I answered. "Still—it *is* romantic, isn't it? And besides, even if I were very angry, I—I'm afraid I'd forgive you *anything* after seeing you ride that horse."

"I'm hanged if I couldn't, too," said Stan. And laughing, the two shook hands.

"And I suppose I shall have to, as well," purred Mrs. Ess Kay, quite kittenishly, "if only *somebody* would introduce Mr. Harborough to me."

(As if anyone cared whether she forgave him or not!)

"What about the Duchess?" asked Sally.

"Oh, when I tell her that Betty's engaged to marry a chap I've met and liked in town—a thorough sportsman, too, it will be all right," said Stan.

I was glad he didn't refer to Jim's money, even though that *is* the thing which will appeal most to Mother. As for me, I am almost sorry he isn't poor, if there's room in my heart to be sorry about anything. But I don't believe there is. It's such a beautiful world, and I shall have two homes in it now; one on each side the water.

THE END

d
u
e
-
y
-
d
s.
-
)
a
t,
h
r
y
e
o